

E - 13240





**ABDUL HAMID**

**THE SHADOW OF GOD**



ABDUL HAMID

ALMA WITTLIN

---

ABDUL HAMID  
THE SHADOW OF GOD

*translated from the German by*

NORMAN DENNY

LONDON

John Lane The Bodley Head

**First published 1940**

**Printed in Great Britain by  
UNWIN BROTHERS LIMITED, LONDON AND WOKING  
for John Lane The Bodley Head Limited  
8 Bury Place, London, W.C.1**

## CONTENTS

<i>Author's Note</i>	6
<i>Introduction</i>	9
<i>Table of Major Events</i>	13
I THE UNWANTED CHILD	17
II DARK CHILDHOOD	31
III VISIT TO THE WEST	52
IV THE RISE TO POWER	68
V THE MASTER BUILDS HIS HOUSE	92
VI WAR WITH RUSSIA	117
VII THE QUIET YEARS	143
VIII ARMENIA	170
IX THE NEW CRUSADER	180
X FEAR	201
XI PAN-ISLAM AND THE OIL WELLS	233
XII DEFEAT	252
<i>Bibliography</i>	289
<i>Index</i>	294

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

**T**HIS biography is primarily a psychological study. It seeks to portray the last of the great Oriental despots, a man who figured most prominently in what may now be recognized as one of the great and decisive developments in modern history—the trend of the East towards Western civilization, which was among the contributory causes of the first World War.

Two Turkish Sultans, Mahmud V and Mahmud VI, succeeded Abdul Hamid, but these were no more than the shadows of kings. He was the last real Sultan. Within our time (he died in 1918) he existed as the personification of a world remote from ours in two senses: it was medieval, and it was the world of the legendary East. He lived through a period of transition with all its attendant calamities, for which he alone was blamed, although they were a natural sequel to the history of many hundreds of years. These pages are not to be read as a defence of Abdul Hamid. They are merely an account of the principal events of his life in relation to the epoch in which he lived, and a study of human nature in very extraordinary circumstances.

The work is based on a comparison of the literature on the subject which has appeared in many languages (also on contemporary newspaper accounts, handwritten reports from the Austrian and English ambassadors and secretaries at the Embassies, and other documents in the possession of the library of the Austrian Foreign Office and the Public Record Office in London), but more especially on the unpublished testimony of persons who once formed a part of the Sultan's entourage—members of the imperial family, officials, palace-secretaries, sons of members of the Government and women of the Harem. These persons either live obscurely in the new Turkey, or else have left their country altogether. Their intimate knowledge of Abdul Hamid is here made public for the first time.

A. W.

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ABDUL HAMID	<i>Frontispiece</i>
SULTAN AZIZ	54
MURAD	54
THE DOLMABAGDSHE PALACE	76
DERVISH	120
THE SULTAN'S FRIDAY DRIVE	156
AN ARMENIAN VILLAGE	172
ABDUL HAMID IN OLD AGE	234
NIAZI BEY	254
ENVER BEY	254



## INTRODUCTION

### THE ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF TURKEY

UNTIL the thirteenth century the Turks were no more than one tribe among many on the broad plains of Central Asia. They are believed to have emerged from this anonymity and entered the light of history in the year 1227, at first in a passive role, being driven westward by the Mongols, who were at that time a dominating power in Asia. The handful of fugitives, no more than a few thousand, settled in the neighbourhood of Ankara as vassals of the neighbouring kingdom of the Seljuks; and with the collapse of the Seljuks, *circa* 1300, they became an independent nation. Their tribal headman was raised to the dignity of a Sultan, and his name, Osman, became that of the dynasty which ruled over Turkey until, in 1922, the Ottoman Empire finally ceased to exist and the Turkish Republic was born.

In 1453 the Turks captured Constantinople, and in doing so brought to an end the decaying Byzantine Empire, the last shadow of Imperial Rome. With the transformation of the Church of St. Sophia into a mosque there emerged a new threat to the Western world. The "terrible Turk" was a grim reality. In their pride of conquest the Turks boasted that before long they would feed their small, wiry horses from the altar of St. Peter's, in Rome. In 1517 they conquered Egypt

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

and assumed the dignities of the Khalifat, the spiritual overlordship over all Mohammedans, which was at that time vested in the Egyptian Mamelukes. The centre of the Khalifat—the Mohammedan Rome—was transferred from Cairo to Constantinople.

Under Suleiman the Glorious (1520–66) Turkey reached its greatest extent. The empire stretched from Germany to Persia. Hungary and the Balkans were Turkish provinces, and North Africa, from Egypt to Morocco, came under their rule. His Most Christian Majesty of France, François I<sup>er</sup>, concluded an alliance with the heathen Sultan in order to gain support in his struggle with the House of Habsburg. Turkish influence extended throughout Europe.

But in 1683, when they besieged Vienna, the Turks were repulsed. It was the end of the era of conquests, and a period of stagnation set in, soon to be followed by the long defensive against the growing power of Russia. Sir Thomas Roe, who paid a diplomatic visit to the East in 1627, was moved to prophesy that "God may do all things, but in the wit this monarchy is at an end." Nevertheless, in an Anglo-Turkish treaty signed as late as 1809, the Sultan was still described as "Emperor and Conqueror of the Earth, Overlord of Emperors for all Time, He who invests Monarchs with their Crowns." The resounding words, no more than a distant echo of the centuries of conquest, accompanied the decline of Turkey into a state of primitiveness, extreme poverty and ceaseless revolt.

The empire had never achieved any unity. It was an agglomeration of races speaking different tongues, and further divided into the warring creeds of Christ and Mohammed. At the head of each province stood a governor with unlimited powers of tax-extortion. Nor did the central Government make any return for the taxes it received from its subject-peoples. There were no roads or schools or law-courts. Turkish administration followed the principle once pursued

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

by the Turkish armies on foreign soil: it lived by looting the weak. The mass of the inhabitants were peasants and herdsmen reduced to the lowest level of poverty, and high above them, immeasurably remote, was the Sultan, the "Shadow of God upon Earth." There was no native middle-class, its place being filled by foreigners, Greeks and Armenians, who followed the despised callings of trade and craftsmanship in so far as these existed. They had their own schools and law-courts, while education and juridical administration for Mohammedans, both in a very primitive state, were in the hands of the Moslem priesthood.

Successive wars and conquests had maintained the empire's existence. Attempts to transform it into a productive, peaceful economy, and to bring it into closer relations with the West, were first made by the grandfather and father of Abdul Hamid II, the subject of this book. The first schools were founded, and public law-courts were instituted to safeguard the lives and property of individuals, without regard to class, race, or religion. But these attempts at reform encountered a serious obstacle in the stubborn resistance of the Mohammedan majority of the population to any form of change, above all to the granting of equal rights to the Christian "unbelievers" whom in the tradition of the Turkish conquerors they regarded as subject races. Thus when Abdul Hamid was born the internal situation of Turkey presented the strange paradox, in contrast to the West, that progressive, liberal reforms were opposed instead of being demanded by the people, and that the impulse to bring them about came from above and not from below. His grandfather and father, the Sultans Mahmud II and Mejid, were certainly not lovers of freedom, but they perceived the imminent danger of the dissolution of the empire through the falling away of the provinces containing a majority of Christians (Slavs, Greeks, and Armenians), and a general lapsing into barbarism. Nevertheless, their reforms

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

did not go beyond the first attempts, which proved very costly.

In 1875 Turkey's national debt amounted to £200,000,000. The national revenue was assessed at £19,458,570 in the year 1873, nearly £12,000,000 of this sum being derived from indirect taxation. According to unreliable statistics published in 1867, the population numbered 43,000,000, of which roughly 25,000,000 were Moslems and 15,000,000 Christians. The principal racial divisions comprised 15,000,000 Turks, 6,000,000 Slavs, 4,000,000 Roumanians, 2,400,000 Armenians, and 2,000,000 Greeks, the remainder including Egyptians, Arabs, Persians, and natives of North Africa.

When Abdul Hamid ascended the throne in 1876 the vast Ottoman Empire, extending from the confines of Austria to Persia, and from the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf, was still plunged in a state of chronic disorder. It was commonly referred to as "the Sick Man of Europe," and the phrase was not unjust.

TABLE OF MAJOR EVENTS  
IN THE HISTORY OF TURKEY DURING THE  
NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

1809-39 SULTAN MAHMUD II—grandfather of Abdul Hamid.

1809-12 } Wars with Russia and loss of territory.  
1828-29 }

1826 Disbanding of the Janissaries (traditional body of the Sultan's guards).

1830 Algeria ceded to France.

1832 Greece becomes independent.

Attempted reforms affecting administration and education.

1839-61 SULTAN MEJID—father of Abdul Hamid.

Attempts at reform on liberal lines.

1841 Title of Egyptian Pasha declared hereditary: a step towards the separation of Egypt from Turkey.

1842 Birth of Abdul Hamid.

1843 Russian proposal for the partition of Turkey (Egypt and Crete to go to England, the Balkan provinces to become autonomous under Russian protection, Constantinople to be a Free Town).

1854-55 The Crimean War.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

- 1861-76 SULTAN Aziz—uncle of Abdul Hamid.
- 1862 Roumania granted hereditary prince.
- 1867 Visit of the Sultan and his nephews, Murad and Abdul Hamid, to the Paris World Exhibition; Sultan's visit to England.
- 1869 Opening of the Suez Canal.
- 1876 Revolts and massacre in Bulgaria.

### 1876-1908 SULTAN ABDUL HAMID.

- 1877-78 War with Russia and loss of territory in the Balkans.
- 1881 Revolt of Arabi; entry of British troops into Egypt.
- 1885 Armenian massacres.
- 1894-95 More Armenian massacres.
- 1895 European proposals for reform of Turkey.
- 1897 War with Greece.
- 1898 Visit of the German Emperor to Turkey.
- 1899 Bagdad Railway concession granted to Germany.
- 1903 Insurrection in Macedonia; Austrian-Russian proposals for reform of Turkey.
- 1908 Meeting between the Czar and the King of England at Reval—proposals for reform of Turkey. Young Turk revolution.
- 1909 Deposition of Abdul Hamid and exile to Salonica.
- 1918 Death of Abdul Hamid.

**ABDUL HAMID**

**THE SHADOW OF GOD**



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE UNWANTED CHILD

THE birth of the child was a surprise. A young Circassian girl had contrived to hide her secret from her companions in the royal Harem. Had the new arrival been a girl it would have been no great matter: but when—on September 22, 1842—a boy was born in the Harem of the Turkish Sultan, the child's first cry was a command. A messenger was sent at once to inform the Sultan, The Shadow of God upon Earth, of his newest fatherhood.

Mejid, the ruling Sultan, was a man who did not disdain to use the words "freedom" and "progress." As a concession to modernity he was accustomed to walk for an hour every morning, and he was thus engaged at the time of his son's birth. His frivolous habit of strolling, clad in a simple black cloak and with only one companion, through the rubbly streets of the beautiful city of Constantinople, was not approved by his people. They called it "European"; and the desire for physical exercise appeared to them a remarkable idiosyncrasy, for a state of complete immobility was generally recognized in Turkey as the highest delight. The words "European"—"Western"—"Christian" were still for most Turks terms of reproach, and for the more conservative Mohammedans they were terms of abuse, despite the fact that during the past decade the "inevitable reform of Turkey" had become a slogan of the times.

Regardless of Oriental ceremony, the hurrying messenger was compelled to make his report to Mejid in the street. A son had been born to the House of Osman! The wailing bundle, at that moment being ceremoniously bestowed in its cradle amid a crowd of excited women, had certainly only a moderate chance of becoming one day the "Shadow of God," since it was the second son.

"Which woman is the mother?" asked Mejid. His mind's eye travelled through the immense, white marble edifice of the new palace of Dolmabagdshe, through all the many rooms of the Harem. He had recently been forced to extend still further the women's apartments, for the number of his women grew inordinately, so that there was now scarcely less than five hundred of them.

The messenger named the mother—Hadji. She was a woman whom Mejid had especially loved, had indeed so passionately loved that subsequently, from satiety or from exhaustion, he had avoided her. He now searched his memories, the many memories of hot loves grown cold and overpast, but, strangely, the picture he sought eluded him. He pondered, staring at the messenger, but finding no enlightenment he returned with a fitting dignity to the palace and sent a eunuch to the young mother with presents, kind words and with a question: when had her happiness originated?

The eunuch returned to the Sultan with Hadji's story of an encounter in the Harem bath, which Mejid seemed disposed to accept. It was an everyday happening in the Harem. The master was fond of surprising his women in the bath. Such a man, his mind so packed with similar memories, could not lightly trust memory to refute the story. Nevertheless, the day after the boy's birth passed without his having received the official paternal recognition. Seven more days and nights went by without a deciding word from the Sultan; and seldom had the birth of a child set up so much stir in the palace. Without the

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

paternal recognition it was as good as unborn: it had no life in that world which acknowledged no law other than the Sultan's word. It might happen that the boy would vanish as unexpectedly as he had appeared.

Eight days after his birth, however, he was the subject of a formal edict in which he was acknowledged to be the son of the Sultan and Khalif. He was named Abdul Hamid, but the women not infrequently called him "Bedros," a common Armenian name. It was the echo of an unheard-of suspicion: that not the Sultan but an Armenian was the father: that the crime of infidelity had taken place beneath the sacred roof of the Harem, all the more devilish because one of the perpetrators was a Christian, an "unbeliever."

A word in the Harem was instantly a swarm of words, multiplied upon the lips of women. The echoes rolled out among the servants of what the mistresses had said, the princesses, the royal mothers, the "ladies upon whom the master's eyes had rested." In each of the small separate establishments comprising the women's household new versions were born according to the fancy of the lady presiding over that particular cell in the honeycomb. No one could say finally where opinions had arisen, where rumours had been set going, but the restless words, flying amid laughter and whisperings through the splendid, carpeted, mirror-hung rooms, led sometimes to serious consequences. The sumptuously clad, plump, black and white eunuchs, moving constantly between the Harem and the Selamlik, the apartments of the master, stored behind their slavish grins even the most trivial rumours. No woman was more eager for gossip than these emasculated creatures.

The child's origin remained in doubt. But the fable, or the truth, of an Armenian father grew larger. It was said that the lover had continued his visits even after it was born. And presently a new rumour arose. The "Armenian father" was

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

said to have disappeared, not only from the Harem but off the face of the earth.

During the daytime Hadji's life remained no different from that of the other women. As the mother of a son she was entitled to more rooms and servants, and her desires in the matter of clothes, jewels and special foods were treated as commands. But at night, when no musician or dancer could fail to appear, and when every creature in this hot-house sparkling in the light of the Venetian crystal chandeliers sought to attract notice with studied graces of smile and speech and movement, the mother of Abdul Hamid was ignored. Still only nineteen, beautiful, and with Circassian blood running in her veins, she was condemned to a sort of living death in that harem world where her childhood had been spent, and which was the only world she knew.

The fragile boy grew up in close contact with his mother, developing more rapidly than other children. Long after he had left her body Abdul Hamid continued to draw upon her strength. Morally and spiritually she did not cease to nourish him. He was surprisingly quick in learning to walk and talk. By the age of four he was an independent being, asking awkward questions, looking precociously about him, even hiding secrets behind the big, dark child's eyes.

But it was not a healthy or a harmonious growth. The rapidly expanding intelligence was given little chance to dwell upon the works of Nature, or upon things of beauty or of use; it was directed towards one object, formed or misformed for one single purpose. His mother brought him up to serve what had become the controlling idea of her life: the desire to remove finally the doubt concerning his legitimacy. No sooner had the child learnt to speak than he began to understand the double meaning of words, the significance of a change of tone, of a gesture. By the time he was six he was the trusted confidant and accomplice of the ambitious, embittered woman. She

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

directed his tasks and he carried them out, not as a tool but as a part of her spirit, as he was part of her flesh. He listened, observed and reported to his mother, who took pleasure in his aptness, bringing him up not with anger or with punishments but with an increasing love.

While the other children played as children do, this one little boy, an increasingly large hooked nose lending a melancholy aspect to his young face, amused himself apparently aimlessly yet with a settled purpose. He could measure his growth by his opportunities to see and hear, by the keyholes that came within his reach and by the hiding-places behind divans and washstands that became too small for him. His greed for knowledge grew no less: and what did the visibility of his body matter if the spirit remained hidden? As other children learned their alphabets, so did he learn the tricks of intrigue, dissimulation and flattery—the weapons of those whom nature or circumstance have condemned to weakness. His school-books were the faces and the speech of men and women. Although the women and eunuchs of the Harem were the creatures of a narrow, rigid world, spiritual slaves and cripples, apathetic and over-stimulated, without harmony and without substance, yet they were a book in which the boy might read the human passions, even those beyond reckoning.

At length it seemed to the mother that the time had come when she might break down the walls of her strange imprisonment within a prison. The child was free to pass through all the doors of the Harem. He could wander into the other parts of the palace, even into the men's apartments; he could draw furtively near to the Sultan himself. Perhaps he could win the master back to her! It was no easy task for a child, to entrap the heart of that spoiled and flattered man, set so high above all other men. Among the women of the Harem it was becoming increasingly difficult for anyone to tempt his fancy. Even the ambassadors of great foreign Powers stood abashed before the

august countenance, although the face of Turkey had lost much of its terror in recent decades.

The boy approached this new enterprise not only with his customary willingness, but with confidence. He did not doubt that he would succeed in winning the affection of the thin, pale, long-bearded man whom so far he had only glimpsed through half-open doors, or contemplated from a distant window when the Shadow of God strolled in his garden. He had heard that the Sultan was a kindly man, and the separation of his father and mother was a state of affairs to which he had been accustomed since his birth. He believed that the other women were the enemies who had kept them apart. It was now his task to bring them together again, the beloved mother and the gentle, kindly father. Thus at the age of six Abdul Hamid prepared to lay siege to a Sultan—even more, to a God.

A constant coming and going was a part of the daily scene in the Selamlık, the men's apartments. The divans that ran the length of the walls, following the ancient Turkish custom, and the wide carpeted spaces were thronged with visitors, exclusively male. Sultan Mejid liked to be surrounded by incessant activity. At regular intervals, and whenever a new guest appeared, lackeys loaded the fragile tables, inlaid with mother-of-pearl and bound with bronze, with immense silver trays bearing innumerable dishes, hot and cold, sweet, salt and sour, representing all the diverse cookery of the land. The mass of rich, highly spiced, inordinately sweetened foods lent to the scene the aspect of an orgy: the spectacle itself drove the feeders into the background. Whole legs of mutton, great hunks of dripping meat on long roasting-spits, drew attention to themselves and away from the faces of the men. The mists of hot fat and burning wood, the scent of carnations, cinnamon and coffee, caused the visitors to sink more deeply into their soft seats, dulling the edge of speech and hearing, and of thought.

At times the Sultan, overcome by weariness, fell asleep at the table. Servants stood ready to conduct their master from the public rooms, for no unprivileged eye might contemplate his slumbering majesty. Visitors of the highest rank were accustomed to turn their heads away. As a rule, however, Mejid's day ended neither at the dinner-table nor among men, but on the other side of the palace, with the women.

In the Harem life had an even greater vividness, a greater stridency. That beehive of hundreds of inter-dependent, intermingled, exclusively feminine households grew with an astonishing rapidity. The love-hosts of the Sultan poured in from every corner of the empire, but not a single woman was Turkish. Not one must be allowed in any sense to consider herself the equal of himself, the One, the Unique. So only "subjects" were chosen, women of the slave-races, daughters of the poorest peasants. According to ancient custom most of the odalisks came from the Circassian villages, where fresh, primitive, full-blooded creatures issued from the harsh mountain lands. But the traditional Circassians did not suffice Mejid. In contrast to the blue-eyed and often fair-haired northern type he wished to have women from his other provinces—from Tripoli, the dark continent, from turbulent Arabia, fanatical Albania and rebellious Egypt. The narrow-eyed, small-boned women were a reminder that Turkey still had her roots deep in Asia. Although custom forbade travel he could still learn to know the lineaments of his empire. In the colour of women's hair, in the pigment of their skins, in the tenderness or dourness of their natures, he could learn of the differences between provinces, the conflict between mountain and sea-coast, between North and South, Europe and Asia. Without quitting the Harem he could know that he was a ruler in three continents. And here at least he was absolute master, as his forefathers had been for three hundred years in the empire and in the world. Nothing had changed in the Harem. A wave of the Sultan's

hand, and an innocent head might fall; a movement towards his handkerchief, and a dozen bright eyes opened the wider to see which, by the tossing of the handkerchief, should be elected to the next hour's favour.

Nor was this all. As though the whole extent of his empire were not enough, with all the feminine beauty it contained, he sought for still other diversions. Not only the twelve-year-old girls whom he considered ripe for womanhood, but even his own sister was the object of attentions which overpassed the bounds of brotherliness. He appeared in her apartments and watched, enchanted, while she played with her slaves. The ecstatic dance ran through rooms and gardens to end as a play of nymphs beneath the marble fountains, an unrestrained offering of the secrets of feminine bodies and passions. Mejid's itch for new sensations left him no peace: he seemed to prefer two-edged joys to fuller satisfactions. Just as it gave him pleasure to witness the refined, unsatiated feminine loves of his sister's household, so he enjoyed the titillations of a mild jealousy. He allowed workmen to enter the apartments of the women. Indeed he ordered gardeners, cooks, architects to work in the Harem, and then with a guileful curiosity cross-examined the women concerning them, stirring up the smouldering lust that slept beneath their boredom and their wasted vitality, and not leaving off until he had been appeased with words of flattery, with the assurance of his own immeasurable superiority over all the men in his empire, not only as Sultan but as a man.

But every day saw the coming of the hour when the movements of the palace were stilled. And then, relaxed and aged, trembling at his own footfall, a pallid man with a sparse beard crept into a small room in the men's quarters, remote from the women and enclosed behind thick walls. Mejid would have no companion when he retired for the night. The guards were ordered to withdraw themselves out of hearing. No armed

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

guard could protect him in that troubled realm which he entered in his dreams.

Sultan Mejid was not a man of culture. Like all the Turkish princes he had never been to school, nor had he received a balanced education. Not until he was grown-up did he see a map of his empire and of its position in relation to Europe. Since then the picture had haunted his slumbers: a paralysed Turkey face to face with the restless West: Europe arising to engulf his realm. Strange portents, of which the Turks knew little or nothing, were springing up over the face of the earth—telegraphs, railways, steamships. In Mejid's fancy, informed with terror and ignorance, these triumphs of the new century assumed the forms of threatening monsters. The Sultan whom the Turks in their innocence called "progressive" was reduced to panic by this picture of Europe, armed with so many distance-annihilating contrivances, sweeping over his frontiers. He felt destruction in his bones.

Indeed, his apprehensions were far from groundless. Europe, the flag-bearer of the century, had set about the inevitable process of subjecting Turkey to the demands of a new age. All Asia was feeling the stir of the new, European way of life; and Turkey, one of the great gateways to Asia, was among the first to be affected. The growth of new ideas, new machines and new riches was producing an astounding growth of population. European minds were turning to the thought of colonies, territories from which raw materials might be extracted and which would offer a market for European goods. Russia favoured the partition of Turkey. The West spoke more moderately of the need to infuse the old empire with new life, and incidentally to add to her purchasing power, by means of reforms. Mines and fields were to be more fully exploited, trade increased, education advanced, new laws promulgated. In a word, Turkey was to be morally and materially Europeanized.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

The situation possesses a peculiar historical interest in that the demand for change came not from within the country but from abroad, and not from below but from above. The Sultan, the "revolutionary" who dared to institute reforms at the command of the foreigner, had to reckon with the fanatical opposition of a simple, hard-living people, accustomed to bear with patience every conceivable deprivation, whose bitterness was, however, instantly aroused at the least infringement of their Holy Writ, or of their belief in the natural superiority of the followers of Mohammed over all unbelievers. Sultan Mejid was well aware of the dangers that surrounded him. If the case arose he would be allowed no easy death. Their hatred of Europe would be branded upon every inch of his quivering flesh. Not speedy knives, but a ceremonial stamping in a gigantic mortar would in accordance with religious usage crush out the life of the Supreme Ruler. These terrors alone were enough to drive a man from his senses; but even these paled in his mind before the ultimate terror of a conflict with Europe in which Turkey would be utterly destroyed.

He had to contend with the lack of an army and the lack of money. Europe had provoked a further dilemma by demanding, in addition to industrial reforms, that the Christian Turks should have equal status with the Moslems; and the Moslems, for their part, proclaimed their dissatisfaction with the existing state of things but opposed every reform not in accordance with tradition.

These were the nightmares which stormed his sleep. But in the morning a burst of song, the traditional, melodious cry of three hundred priests from the minarets of three hundred mosques, heralded the new dawn and released him from the night. Morning found him taking his accustomed walk, as though by this personal concession to European custom he were proclaiming his readiness to fulfil all European demands.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Whether childhood is passed during a period of peace and order, or during an epoch of social upheaval, is a matter of immeasurable importance to the child. The great events taking place in the outer world may lie beyond its understanding, but they reach it none the less through its intuitive relationship with the grown-ups around it.

Seldom had any land been confronted with such radical changes as was Turkey in the nineteenth century. While Abdul Hamid remained a child in the Harem no echo of these matters reached him; but when he escaped from that slumbered and carpeted region, from the reedy voices of the eunuchs and the scent of women, and made his way into the Selamluk, his world widened. The men's quarters, separated from those of the women only by a few rooms and corridors, were like another hemisphere.

The women of the Harem still wore the traditional Eastern costume (the long trousers relics of the day when the wives of cattle-herders had ridden with their men across the steppes of Asia): but in the Selamluk these silken garments were reserved for youths and servants, creatures of no importance. The gentlemen around the Sultan, and the Sultan himself, wore well-cut morning-coats. Nor did they perceive, any more than the boy did, that the "stambulina" was something more than a current fashion, and that when this bourgeois attire had superseded the old knightly, traditional costume, during the reign of Abdul Hamid's grandfather, it had been in effect a capitulation before the hated and despised West. Not many people in Turkey had any clear perception of the relationship between themselves and the outside world.

The palace was till a stronghold of tradition. Its daily customs, its whole aspect, had an underlying quality of fairy-tales, so rich in colour and pathos and romance that the detail of the men's prosaic clothing was unimportant. The boy going in search of his father found himself in a world filled with new

and exciting manifestations. No sooner had he slipped past the doorkeeper than he encountered a number of remarkably handsome and splendidly attired men, each with care and dignity pursuing an allotted task. These activities must have appeared in his young eyes to be of extraordinary importance, although a closer look would have told him that the magnificent beings were lackeys and table-servants, pipe-fillers, coffee-pourers, slipper-bearers. There was great interest for a small boy in studying the various "specialists" of the Selamlik, those figures in a fairy-tale—nightingale and parrot keepers, the Sultan's stirrup-holder and cloak-bearer, the barbers and head barbers, the guardians of the muskets, the men who carried bottles of warm water and the Sultan's purse when he went out. There were dwarfs and deaf-mutes, living caricatures, whose business it was to promote the laughter and self-esteem of others. And there were also servants whose special function was not apparent, singers who did not sing and musicians who made no music. It was their legendary office to sing holy verses while the muslin of the imperial turban was being washed: and since in the increasing godlessness of the world the imperial turban was no longer worn, and no muslin washed, no sacred songs were sung.

Children—boys scarcely larger than himself—played like marionettes on this exotic stage, and it would have been enchanting to join them in making wax candles, plaster models, scented pills of amber and musk. But the purpose which had brought Abdul Hamid into this men's world, the need to win the heart of the greatest man within it, forbade such childish delights. The power and splendour which the boy encountered everywhere upon his cautious journeys must have filled him with awe and with eagerness. He crept into the kitchens: and here again was an army of men—three hundred and fifty persons grouped in twelve separate departments for the service of the master.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

The sense of power and dignity was most overwhelming in the reception-rooms, where not a man dared raise his eyes to meet those of the ruler. Each, as his glance fell upon him, bowed low, as though waiting to receive a command. Should the Sultan address a word to a person in his vicinity all heads were instantly inclined as deeply as the plumpest form could manage, arms were folded over breasts, the gathering became rigid in subjection. No man dared speak with his full voice.

This, then, was the father whom Abdul Hamid sought: in his outward aspect a man high above all other men, a demi-god invested with an aura of sanctity: in secret a trembling and bewildered man forced by his imperial and religious dignities into an unending conflict: an inheritor of heaven and earth who in this grim age, when earth rebelled against heaven, and materialism sought to triumph over the things of the spirit, could be neither the one nor the other.

He did not fail to notice the boy with the big, luminous dark eyes, clad in a small coloured kaftan, who so frequently drew near him. But the gulf remained between them: the question remained, was this child really of his own blood?

Mejid was known to be a good-hearted man. An appeal to his mercy, even for the most inveterate of evil-doers, was never uttered in vain. Only in personal matters did he become implacable. A sense of defeat haunted him. His glory as a prince of the earth was tarnished by the bloodless European conquest of his nation, while as Khalif of the Mohammedans he was affronted by the profane spirit of the age. As a man, at least, he could see to it that no smallest offence came near him; as an average, mediocre man, cast into the tempest of world-shaking events, he would allow no room for conflict in his private life.

Abdul Hamid was therefore rebuffed, and was deeply chagrined. The courtiers, seeing that the master's glance

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

avoided him, remembered the painful rumours which had attended his birth. They drew back from the pallid youngster with the big hook-nose. For two years Abdul Hamid continued to visit the Selamlik, but never did Mejid toss a handkerchief to his wife, Hadji. The boy had to draw what comfort he could from the tales which were told of the greatness and goodness of the Sultan. After each fruitless visit he returned to derive fresh warmth and courage from his mother. But a day came in the year 1849 when his mother had no more warmth to give him. She died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-six.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DARK CHILDHOOD

**T**O find a mother in a harem is not difficult. More than one woman was ready to take charge of Hadji's son after her death. Abdul went first to his nurse and then to Peresto, one of the many childless wives.

Stern unwritten laws deprived the majority of the "nightingales" in the Sultan's golden cage of their natural function of motherhood. A body of instructed women, the "bloody midwives," saw to it that births were ruthlessly restricted, thus averting in the earliest stage the possibility of subsequent bitter and deadly rivalries between brothers. And when a woman succeeded in tricking these experienced practitioners and passing unrobbed through the period of pregnancy the child was subject to another law of the palace, which decreed that in cases where it was not desired to add to the total of the imperial offspring "the navel-cord should be left open." The airs of the Harem were seldom untroubled by the suppressed revolt of hundreds of young women condemned to fruitlessness. For motherhood remained the only means whereby a woman could emerge from the ranks of the slaves. If she had the happiness to bear one of the first four children of the Sultan she would become truly a wife. She might even become one day the mother of the Sultan, the honoured, feared, all-powerful mistress of the Imperial Harem, "the Sultan's female self." Only when their youth was past did the childless women

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

turn their frustrate longings to the children of others, whom they spoiled immeasurably. Abdul Hamid's foster-parent lavished all her affection upon him, but the boy carried loyalty to his dead mother so far as to return evil for this good. He declared that her tenderness for him was not innocent.

With his mother's death the first task of Abdul Hamid's life had ended in failure. He had not succeeded in reconciling his parents. The father's love he had sought for two years was denied him, and his bitter discouragement was transformed into hatred of his surroundings.

It was an emotion which had room to flourish, for the children of the Harem had ample leisure in which to indulge their susceptibilities. Their teachers, respectfully bowing, were obliged to exercise the utmost tact in introducing them to the arts of reading and writing. Their religious studies were confined to the learning of a few texts from the Koran, and it was not expected of them that they should employ much effort to fathom the meaning of the Holy Writ. Polite French conversation and a little music comprised the rest of their education. Although during those years the first schools on Western lines were inaugurated in Turkey, and Western scientific lectures were delivered, no echo of these impious matters was allowed to reach the Olympus which harboured the offspring of the Shadow of God. It was held, perhaps, that excessive learning was an affront to the Divine Wisdom. The sacred destiny of the princes, those representatives of God upon earth, would suffice to guide them in the political decisions which they might be required to make without any knowledge of facts. Such assumptions had formed the basis of Turkish policy for several hundred years.

Untroubled by fixed school hours or by scholastic necessities the children could disport themselves in freedom, so far as freedom existed in the Harem. The monotony of their life and the lack of all outside stimulation made them moody, at times

profoundly indolent and at times excessively lively. There were days when they tore and screamed through the rooms of the palace, breaking glass and destroying the costly hangings. The grown-ups watched with indifference this waste of youthful energies. What could be done? The life of prisoners has its own rules. None were scolded except those who showed a disposition to revolt against their collective life and to withdraw from the herd.

When his mother died Abdul Hamid was drawn into the circle of the other children, but he remained none the less solitary. Being compelled to live with the rest, he did so as a rebel. His pleasure was to watch the others. Most of these young creatures were conceived of a father prematurely weakened by sexual over-indulgence; they were born to mothers constantly over-stimulated by the erotic atmosphere of the Harem. They withered before they had properly ripened. Stuffy air, lack of exercise and inordinate quantities of food made them heavy and flaccid. After a short period of play they were wont to fall back again upon the feathered divans, to slumber while the southern sun beat upon the windowpanes. But the one boy who had stayed aloof while the game was on now began to play a game of his own. He would creep up to the others and frighten them out of their sleep, studying them, probing them for revelations of weakness. Though physically weaker than most of his companions, he was master of them all in coolness and audacity. On one occasion he stole the gems which adorned the clothing of his young brothers Reshad and Kemaleddin and his sister Semeh. His father was particularly enraged when he learned of this misdeed. And when Abdul Hamid added to his crimes by stealing a pastry from the table and creeping into a corner to eat it, the Sultan exclaimed: "He's incorrigible! None of my children gives me any trouble except this young schemer. Take him away! I don't want to see him!"

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Mejid's indifference to his son had changed to open dislike—concealed, perhaps, during the mother's lifetime in order that no substance might be lent to the suspicion of illegitimacy. Thus Abdul Hamid's loneliness was complete. His father's attitude, his own attitude towards his foster-mother, the death of his nurse and his antagonism towards the other children made of him a solitary figure such as was rarely seen in the little crowded world of the palace. Eventually, however, he found a friend.

This first friend of his own choosing was a lady of the Harem, the mother of his uncle Aziz, the Crown Prince, who was the Sultan's younger brother. No doubt it was in part the extraordinarily close bond between the boy and his mother which caused him instinctively to turn for friendship to a woman. But this was not the only reason. His search for affection in the Selamlik had brought him nothing; his first encounter with the world of men had led to a rebuff. He did not forget the experience. Humiliation burned deep into his heart, and the memory stayed with him all his life. As he grew older he did not cease to blame himself for that failure of childhood, that first refusal at the hands of his father which came to signify for him a refusal at the hands of all men. Half-grown, but filled with masculine pride, he turned back to the women.

While other boys were beginning to take an interest in girls their own age, he attached himself to a woman old enough to be his grandmother, but who was none the less one of the most interesting in the palace. This new friend, Madame Pertevale, had three passions, the first of which she was obliged to conceal as carefully as a young odalisk hiding an illicit love-affair: it was her love for her son, Aziz, the heir to the throne.

The Turkish Heir-Apparent was wise above all things to remain inconspicuous. Even his mother's love might be the

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

cause of political repercussions harmful to the ruling Sultan: and an unwritten law of the House of Osman empowered the ruler, upon mounting the throne, to put to death every male relative whose rivalry might become dangerous. The shrewd Madame Pertevalé had known many such cases of brother-murder. Only twenty sons out of his hundred-and-two children had survived Murad III, and of these twenty, nineteen had been strangled by the slaves of the oldest immediately after the burial of their father. They had been interred with all the ceremony due to an act of public policy performed in accordance with the Turkish ruling principle—"Unrest is a greater evil than execution."

Being forced to hide her love for her son, Madame Pertevalé gave free rein to her other passions. Her love of finery grew with the years, and was only exceeded by her passion for astrology. Such ardours grow warmer still when they can be shared, and it was Abdul Hamid who became the companion of her mystical hours. The unequal pair, the richly attired and painted old woman and the pale, slender boy, passed many hours a day together at their secret business, with Arabian, Persian and Egyptian books piled high on the divans and rugs.

The rooms of a person so important as the mother of the Crown Prince, who would one day become the mother of the Sultan and the First Lady of the palace, were not easily penetrated by the curiosity of slaves or even by the malice of the eunuchs. Abdul Hamid, received first as a protégé but soon to become an intimate, was enormously fortified in his self-esteem. No other child was allowed into that sanctuary. The difference between himself and the other children, which had been a source of mortification, was now transformed into an advantage; and with his first satisfaction the desire grew to enhance this newly acquired sense of superiority. The introduction to astrology and its kindred arts enchanted him no

less than the tribute to himself. With a mingled playfulness and awe he learned to repeat incomprehensible magic formulae in Persian and Arabic, while his youthful hands struggled to make drawings on paper and in the air, and to sew queer little dolls out of fragments of material. When the sewing was completed the dolls were pierced with innumerable needle-thrusts, while magic words were uttered under the breath. The wrinkled, painted forehead of the old woman and the boy's smooth brow grew damp together with the effort of a hard-won victory. Each of the dolls which they sewed and then stabbed represented a person in the palace, a person hated, or considered ill-disposed, or otherwise to be feared. They executed sentence of death and sentence of castration. Overbearing girls were made the mothers of hideous children, and lying eunuchs had their mouths slit from ear to ear. The liberal minister, Rushdi Pasha, the prophet of the new reforms which were to bring about the equality of all men, even of Moslem and Christian (Pertevalé called him a traitor and a "Christian dog"), was a constant figure upon the stage of this little theatre of black magic. It was a theatre in which hatred was the prevailing emotion, a hatred born of terror and the lust for power, of all the passions of imprisoned lives.

The thoughts and longings of the little boy as he passed his time at these pursuits present a sombre riddle. One may question how far he regarded this rhythmic pricking, to the tune of meaningless incantations, as anything more than a game with dolls. Did he share the old woman's ecstasies, which shortened for her the time of waiting until her son should become Sultan? The years passed, bringing him from childhood to the verge of manhood, but they brought him no nearer to the throne. At the age of fourteen he was still a child playing with toys. Not only his father, but his father's brother, Aziz, and his own elder brother, Murad, stood in his way. Did he begin at that early age to long for power? . . .

A struggle for power no less impassioned and merciless than the little dramas enacted in the apartment of Madame Pertevalé was going on at this time between the political leaders of France, Russia and Turkey. This, too, seemed to have its aspects of magic, just as it had its elements of inordinate vanity, hypocrisy and humbug.

It began, darkly and romantically, with the disappearance from the Church of the Sepulchre in Jerusalem of a small golden star, let into the mosaic of the floor, which was believed to mark the spot where once the head of Christ had lain.

The Holy Places of Jerusalem were a meeting-place of the nations, the one object of universal pilgrimage in a world which did not yet make a habit of travel. Greek and Roman Christians, Jews, Mohammedans and the members of countless sects here met and mingled; and this flowing stream of the devout brought with it a flotsam of tradesmen, beggars and pickpockets in quest of petty gains. Not only the pockets of the pilgrims but the riches of the Holy Places themselves afforded opportunities for small thefts which as a rule went unpunished. The star in the floor of the Church of the Sepulchre (the "Star of the Anointing") had more than once been stolen in the course of the centuries, and it had been replaced without the incident giving rise to any great stir. But its latest disappearance, in the year 1852, was made the pretext for a great European political offensive against Turkey, within whose jurisdiction Jerusalem lay.

Since the Middle Ages and the Crusades, France had been the acknowledged guardian of the Holy Places and of all Catholics living in Turkey. Hitherto she had made little use of the privilege, but suddenly her attitude changed. Nothing was now too insignificant to engage her Catholic anxiety. As the protector of the Catholics she demanded, with as much emphasis as if it were a matter of the entry into Paradise, the key to the great door of the Church in Bethlehem. The demand

produced excited echoes in Russia, who became instantly extremely concerned to maintain the undivided supremacy of the Orthodox Church throughout Jerusalem, and who insisted upon the preservation of rights never set forth in writing, which had been passed from mouth to mouth down the centuries, undergoing every imaginable distortion in the process.

To an outsider these distortions might have appeared scarcely more important than the questions of etiquette from which they derived. Should Catholics enter the church at Bethlehem through a side door or through the main doorway? Were Roman no less than Greek Christians to enjoy the privilege of celebrating Mass once a year beside the grave of the Holy Virgin? And which should stand under the dome of the church at Gethsemane—Greek or Roman Catholics, Copts or Armenians? Trivial though these questions may seem, the petitions received in Constantinople from French, Spanish, Italian and Greek religious bodies, and from the Governments in Paris and St. Petersburg, became so numerous that the Turkish officials were to a great extent shaken out of their traditional composure. No sooner had the Sublime Porte, the ultimate Turkish authority, sent out answers as courteous as they were non-committal, no sooner had the bundles of petitions been stowed away in sacks (so much less easy of access than filing cabinets) than further and more sharply worded documents arrived.

Napoleon III, still only President of France, but nursing imperial ambitions and feeling himself overshadowed by the fame of his illustrious uncle, was looking for an opportunity to make a display of power. He had not forgotten the great Bonaparte's interest in the East, and especially in Constantinople, which he had described as "the key to world mastery." Such phrases as "The Stone of the Anointing" and "The Vaults of the Virgin" sounded oddly on the lips of a statesman

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

who more commonly talked of railways and telegraphs. The spirit of medievalism was indeed no more fitted to the times than were its coats of mail: but the third Napoleon, his eyes upon a throne, was ready to catch at any straw to win the popular favour. It seemed that a wave of reaction was now sweeping over Europe after the explosive years of 1830 and 1848.

At the same time the new trend in European politics towards the assertion of "national rights" was not abated. Soon the Russian notes to Turkey were not confined to the discussion of the Holy Places. They went on to deal with the question of those Christian brothers "who must be freed from the Turkish yoke." What had begun as a religious controversy thus assumed a new and ominous form.

It was not the first time Russia had stretched out a hand towards Turkey. For centuries the "Northern Glacier" had been trying to thrust its way south towards Constantinople. In order to inspire in their people the necessary zeal for conquest and bloodshed, successive Czars had referred to the "last will" of Peter the Great, which had ordered that the harbour on the Straits should be annexed by Russia. Multitudes of Russians had fallen in repeated attempts to execute this testamentary command, which Western politicians described as a common forgery. They had seemed to be approaching success when a further outburst of bloodshed in the West, during the French Revolution, had restrained them. The Czars had been compelled to leave Turkey in peace while they kept an eye on the revolutionary elements in their own land. But now that the spirit of revolution in Europe was receding the ruling Czar, Nicholas, found the moment propitious for a fresh onslaught.

During a reception at the Palace of St. Petersburg, in the winter of 1853, he had a talk with the English ambassador, Sir Hamilton Seymour. The subject was Turkey, referred to

by the Czar only as "the Sick Man." Nicholas had carefully pondered the most suitable line of treatment for the sickness. He spoke of an operation to be undertaken in time to avert not only the danger of a general collapse of the crumbling structure, but also the succeeding chaos, in which the whole of Europe might become involved. He was ready with his own Christian hands to administer the *coup de grâce*, carving up the still living body of the invalid. To England he offered Egypt and Crete as compensation for the Turkish Danube Provinces, which would fall to him as a reward for his labours in bestowing freedom upon his "Christian brothers." Despite his shrewdness the Russian seemed to have little understanding of the famous English waiting policy. "Your Majesty speaks of a sick man," said Sir Hamilton. "Forgive me if I suggest that it is the duty of the strong to protect the ailing and the weak."

The hour of the Turkish Empire had not yet struck. The European Powers still wrangled among themselves, and to Turkey's advantage. Finally Russia's impatience led in 1853 to open warfare in which England and France fought as allies on the Turkish side. Lord Palmerston declared frankly that England was fighting in her own interest, to protect the route to India against Russian encroachment: but this alliance signified an unexpected change in the fortunes of Turkey.

The trifling episode of a piece of mosaic stolen from the floor of the Church of the Sepulchre had become an historical event of greatest advantage to the country which was most nearly affected. Caught up in the current of the times the humbled, backward Turks, trembling on the brink of a catastrophe, found themselves through no effort of their own equal partners of the nations of the West. Side by side with the Lords of Creation they opposed the march of the "Russian barbarians." The old gulf, the antagonism between Turkey and Europe, seemed to be forgotten. It did not seem impossible

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

that amid the strange new forces arising in this miraculous century the frontiers between Asia and Europe, that mythical threshold which betokened a separation of natural elements, might in turn lose their significance.

The three-year war in the Crimea, in which thousands of Turks, Frenchmen and Englishmen lost their lives, remained even more remote from the children of the royal Harem than from the children of other royal households. They were never allowed to enter the town on foot, and when on feast-days they visited the mosques all the appearances of war were carefully removed from the path of the splendid royal carriages. But when it was over even the children knew that it was a victory. Beaming faces were everywhere. The women wore new and costly clothes. They were permitted, indeed they were commanded, to revolutionize their wardrobes, exchanging the trousers, long coats, caps and veils of tradition for European garments. Madame Pertevale, abandoning black magic, was a constant visitor to the bazaars, from which she returned followed by carriers bowed down under loads of stuffs and furs. Sultan Mejid had so far displayed his love of progress as to permit the women actually to enter the bazaars, instead of waiting in their carriages for the goods to be brought to them. This added freedom had already increased their love of shopping: but with the ending of the Crimean War their extravagance knew no limits. A doctor who operated on a lady of the Harem for an ingrowing toenail was rewarded with a bonus of twelve thousand francs in addition to his fee. The royal princes were complimented as though they themselves had won the war. In their separation from the outside world, with no standard of values except that of the palace, the children came to regard themselves as little gods, all-powerful and flawless.

They also shared in the satisfaction of eating off plates of

gold adorned with precious stones. They knew nothing of the report that Turkey's great European friend, Napoleon III, failing to recognize the sublimity of the Sultan, had openly expressed his disapproval when this extravagant dinner-service was ordered in Paris. They heard on the other hand the happy news that the Emperor of the French was soon to visit Constantinople; and shortly afterwards a soft steady tapping sounded in the palace as the rooms which Napoleon was to occupy were decorated with pearls. Could any fairy-tale be more splendid?

As it happened, the Emperor did not visit Constantinople after all; but no expenditure could have been too great to honour the man to whom Turkey owed so much money. For during the war the deplorable state of the Turkish finances had become unconcealable. The soldiers had fought in rags, and officials had gone for years without their proper salaries. Turkey had been forced to borrow from her allies, receiving first a loan of £3,000,000 from England, who exacted a lien on the Egyptian tribute as security. Once begun, the process was continued. Scarcely a year passed without the mortgaging of customs receipts or monopolies of salt, tobacco and other goods. After her long period of conquest Turkey had entered upon a new epoch—that of loans.

The war ended, but not the borrowing. Turkey had shown herself to be a valuable bulwark against Russia, and Europe therefore laid new emphasis upon the necessity for reforms. Every strengthening of the body of the "Sick Man," and no one doubted that this was still Turkey's lamentable condition, added force to the clauses of the Peace Treaty which protected the route to India by closing the Dardanelles to Russian ships. Moreover, the English and French were not only thinking of war. The loans, the sending of economic and military commissions into the provinces of the vast empire, the founding of schools, the building of railways and telegraphs—all this

was also undertaken with an eye to business. Not only were soldiers to march over the new Turkish roads against Russia, but European merchants were to assist in the conquest of Asia. The proposed new Turkish schools were to educate little prospective buyers of European manufactured goods.

The first developments of this plan were propitious. English cotton clothed the Turkish peasants, English ploughs furrowed the Turkish fields, and the opinion grew in Turkey that "the English surpassed all others in power, cleverness, and the excellence of their manufactures." A new happiness, born of new illusions, began to pervade the land. The phenomenon of capital had appeared, and the Turks were to prove themselves as reckless in dealing with money as they had once been as conquerors and later became in their apathy. It was a time of lively activities which invested Constantinople with the appearance of new growth. Although at the beginning of the railway-age a journey to the East was still a rarity, the lure of those secret lands served to stimulate the spirit of enterprise of the increasingly prosperous European commercial classes. The Turks in their inexperience, and with the scorn of old warriors for trade and industry, allowed their business interests to fall into the hands of a multitude of Europeans not of the best type. Adventurers of all kinds, dreamers, confidence-tricksters, shady offshoots of the financial world, set up new and fabulous undertakings. In an age of scientific miracles no promise went unbelieved. Companies were formed for the purchase of tracts of land no one had ever seen, on which were to arise buildings, railways, banks and telegraph-posts—shadowy transactions whose future appeared, none the less, more solid than the pasts of many of their transactors. Polish refugees from Russia, versed in nothing but the crafts of tailoring and cobbling, did not hesitate to try and enter the highly technical sphere of engineering. The business of obtaining the concessions which were necessary for every new undertaking

was in itself a highly profitable pursuit, and the mere rumour of acquaintanceship with an official of the Sublime Porte was enough to feed a family. The cry "*Enrichissez-vous!*", the slogan of King Louis Philippe, resounded over the Bosphorus, but with a greater ecstasy in keeping with the tumultuous nature of the East.

Thus Turkey was paying dearly for her newest laurels. Her Sultan was accepted as an equal sovereign in the concert of European Powers—but at a price. Her victory in the Crimean War was in reality a defeat. She was conquered by the new strange power of capital, and by her Western allies, who had become her creditors. It seemed that the inexorable process must end in the purchase by Europe of the whole of Turkey, the conquest of the one-time "fighting nation" by the most powerful and the most subtle of modern weapons—the weapon of gold.

The leaders of Turkey had always been great soldiers. Turkish generals had distinguished themselves in the Crimean War, foremost among them Osman Pasha, the "lion of Plevna." But with the ending of the war it seemed that the era of the Turkish warriors was also ended. The era of loans set in. The new Turkish leaders needed to have not military virtues but shrewd heads; they needed to understand not only money but the psychology of a money-worshipping age, if Turkey was to keep her place in the changing world.

Whence was the saviour of Turkey to come? The hold of the Osman Dynasty upon the throne was more secure than that of any other ruling family, for the Sultan was also Khalif, the Pope of the Mohammedans. Only the dynasty, then, could produce the saviour. The destiny of Turkey hung upon the chance that the thinning Osman blood might once again, one last time, produce a son who would prove himself equal to the hour, a "Mahdi," a great Awakener.

But those who cherished such a hope must have despaired when they contemplated the existence of the growing Osman princes. To look here for a man, an individual, was to see only a herd in which individuality had no place. They still lived in the "Cage of Princes," as they had done in the Middle Ages. The brother of the Sultan, the sons and nephews, lived the passive lives of children, rarely emerging from their seclusion, and then only under guard.

In appearance the "cages" had the aspect of European palaces and villas. European fashions in furniture as in other things became popular during the years following the Crimean War. The broad, low divans were replaced by high, decorative chairs and couches, forcing the Turks to give up their habit of sitting with their legs under them and to sit, instead, with their feet "shamelessly" revealed. Only the "die-hards" were strong-minded enough to refuse to use European beds, and to go on sleeping, as they had always done, fully clothed on a pile of cushions in the corner of a divan. But the process of modernization did not go beyond material objects. The spirit of the Turks in their up-to-date rooms and frock-coats remained unchanged; they had become drab mirrors reflecting only the past.

Since they did not develop their bodies with games, or educate their minds with study or travel, reading or discussion, only one pastime remained open to the princes, the pursuit of love. This was the employment of their thoughts, their emotions and their bodies. It made of these growing youths, with all their manifold possibilities, men cast in one mould—thoughtless in their desires, reckless in their jealousies, changeable in their moods and charged with a childish vanity, always quicker to demand than to give. Love, which in normal life brings out the noblest qualities, was not a good educator in the Cage of Princes. The youths who in their earliest encounters might permit themselves every indulgence of tyranny

and evil fancy, receiving in return only meekness and acquiescence, were likely to carry with them into wider spheres those unchecked vices of moody egotism, cruelty and arrogance.

After their circumcision, which took place generally in their thirteenth year, the "Lalas," a special category of eunuch, half teacher and half servant, proceeded to watch them for the first signs of awakening desires, and to see to it that none went unsatisfied. A passion without outlet might lead to dangerous thoughts, to conspiracy against the Sultan, even to thoughts of the throne itself. Whereas the princes of the West were from their earliest youth educated for their calling, the minds of the Turkish princes were systematically diverted from affairs of State.

Prince Abdul Hamid made the business of the "Lalas" difficult. His circumcision had been ceremoniously performed, but he made no response to feminine approaches. Even when he came to possess women he did so without any deep affection. This, it may be said, was not unusual, for the great majority of love-encounters in the Harem were more or less impersonal. The women were seldom more than the impersonal embodiment of their sex. Their upbringing in the palace (which included a final two-year course of training to make them worthy of the Sultan) was designed to turn them into marionettes, artists of smiles and dance-steps and caresses. Real warmth was rarely to be found upon their lips. And so his first love-passages did nothing to break down the barrier which was growing up between Abdul Hamid and the rest of mankind.

His upbringing was precisely similar to that of his brothers and cousins: that is to say, he received no proper upbringing. He did not go to school, nor did he undergo any methodical education, despite his evident intelligence. His youthful curiosity (or was it a genuine desire for knowledge?) was forced to feed upon such scraps as he picked up haphazard,

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

and the resultant chaotic picture afforded him no clue as to his place in the scheme of things, no guidance for his ripening faculties. The picture was all the more strange since such rumours of the outside world as penetrated to the Cage of Princes were brought in by the eunuchs, whose crippled, distorted natures found solace in an exaggerated fondness for the grotesque, the horrible and the bizarre.

The war with Russia was long over, but the tales of killing went on undiminished. No victory over the Russians had aroused in the eunuchs so much grisly satisfaction as did the reports of battles between Turkish subjects in times of peace. Abdul Hamid, who was always at hand when tales were being told, certainly missed none of them, but at first he may have found it hard to understand why the Armenian peasants were in bloody quarrel with their neighbours, the Kurdish cattle-herders, and why the Syrians had suddenly taken to fighting one another. At length he understood that in every province the inhabitants were divided into two hostile parties—Mohammedans and Christians, "believers" and "unbelievers."

The Turkish alliance with England and France, bringing with it a closer contact with the West, had resulted in a sudden speeding up of the gradual process of Europeanization. No sooner was the war over than a reaction set in, and the ancient conflict between the Moslem and Christian subjects of the Sultan flared up with an unprecedented bitterness. The Moslems felt themselves to be threatened in this world no less than in the next. Not only did the new laws of religious equality undermine their moral superiority, based on the conviction of a privileged status in the after-life, but they seriously affected the material existence of these untutored, unskilled and shiftless followers of the Prophet, who had hitherto benefited by lesser taxation and by their higher standing with the authorities. On the other hand, the changed circumstances prompted the Christians to abandon their traditional patience for a revengeful

fury. Local conflicts, moreover, came to assume a new significance with the growth of new and unheard-of forces. The story of a brawl among cattle-herders, or of a quarrel between townspeople envious of each other's earnings, was spread far and wide over the growing network of railways and telegraphs; and the news served not only to provoke other outbreaks but also to draw from Europe murmurs of sympathy for the persecuted Christians, regardless of the fact that these were as often attackers as attacked. Not confining herself to words alone, France sent troops designed, so the diplomatic formula ran, "to support the Sultan against his rebels." French forces landed in Syria, and in order to avoid a conflict with his recent allies the Sultan was forced to employ troops of his own to suppress civil war. Fresh blood flowed in Turkey at the command of Europe; Moslem was turned against Moslem, brother against brother. The European nightmare which had for so long troubled Mejid's slumbers was assuming a terrible form.

The truth was that the European nations, intoxicated with the spirit of the century of progress, were demanding far more of Turkey than they themselves had accomplished. The gradual evolution of Europe from nomadism to the elaborate centralized mechanism of the capitalist State, had been a process occupying many centuries. But Turkey, which had remained static since the Middle Ages, was now required to achieve the final results of this process at a single stroke.

The dualistic outlook of the contemporary European statesmen, influenced as they were both by the liberal philosophy of the eighteenth century and by the rationalism of the nineteenth, impaired their power of realistic thinking. They held that the key to human happiness lay in the pursuit of such abstract principles as "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," "the Dignity of Labour" and "Reason and Enlightenment." And this brought about a growing contradiction in their

attitude. Believing also, in the light of current theory, that men could be manipulated no less surely than matter, they worked out exact plans for the reform of Turkey. They tried the experiment of turning wandering cattle-herdsman and independent mountain peasants into routine-loving citizens, class-conscious proletarians, producers of raw materials for Western industry who would at the same time increase their own purchasing power. And in attempting to regulate the lives of men and women according to the newest scientific principles the European nations became the harbingers of tragedy. Turkey was riven through and through with gulfs of creed and nationality. Passions ran wild, and blood flowed in the land of the youthful Abdul Hamid.

News of the embittered religious conflicts, and of the increasingly dictatorial influence of the European Governments, penetrated into the royal palaces, causing especial agitation in the Cage of Princes. The simple-minded eunuchs, the news-bearers, were stirred to a heightened eloquence by sympathy for their brothers of the Faith. They wept over the death of a single believer, and recounted with glee tales of burning Christian villages, wrecked churches, and fanatics who, aroused to their ancient furies by the sight of a woman in European clothes (a sight which had long ceased to be a rarity), impaled Jesuit priests upon weather-vanes torn from the roofs of European mission-houses.

Every detail was embroidered with an Oriental love of tale-telling. The distant provinces of the land, men and countryside alike, appeared to Abdul Hamid enshrouded in a mist of strife and hatred. He did not forget what he heard. The picture built up in his mind out of these ill-assorted elements was made enduring by the depth of his religious feeling, and by his instinctive sympathy with the fanatical hatred of Mohammedan for Christian. This was the one passion he acquired which was, in its essence, not ignoble. Although at first he felt it

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

only remotely, he could not escape its grip. The whole trend of his upbringing, which afforded him neither precise knowledge nor experience, served to engulf him in the wild tide of Moslem fanaticism.

His older brother, Murad, the future "Lord of All Believers," was a square-shouldered, good-humoured youth. He tried to draw his solitary, small, suspicious junior into the circle of the other boys, their brothers and cousins. But even brotherhood meant little in the Harem, where sons of the same father were born of different mothers, and the jealousies and hatreds of the women were passed on to their sons.

"I hate you," said Abdul Hamid to Murad. He did not often speak so frankly, and the words must have been long in his mind. "Why was I not born before you?"

The seeds of the tragedy of Cain and Abel were thus implanted in the two brothers while they still stood upon the threshold of life. The new version of the ancient drama, intertwined with the destinies of the Turkish Empire, was further embittered by Abdul Hamid's memory of his scorned and humiliated mother, and his jealousy of the son of a loved and honoured wife. The rivalry for a throne was taking shape.

In the year 1861 Sultan Mejid died. He was barely thirty-nine. The doctors attributed his death to consumption, but the complete exhaustion induced by his deliberate excesses was more truly the cause. It was a slow suicide which freed him from his terror of Europe and from the sense of his incapacity to rule Turkey in a time of growing crisis.

The land of the "mild and liberal" Sultan was left in a state of unmitigated need, torn asunder by religious differences, by racial and social conflicts, and loaded down with debts. Although foreign loans had now reached a total of £180,000,000, the need for fresh capital was unabated. Four-fifths of the money originally designed for "the regeneration of Turkey" had been appropriated by the Sultan for his personal use. Scarcely any

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

attempt had been made to carry out the proposed reforms. The building of a single iron bridge in Constantinople had taken nine years.

Mejid's brother, Aziz, the oldest member of the family of Osman, now came to the throne. Murad became Crown Prince, and Abdul Hamid was the third man in the realm.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### VISIT TO THE WEST

WHILE the body of Sultan Mejid still lay in the mosque upon a simple straw mattress, condemned by puritanical custom to this last discomfort, his brother and successor, Aziz, was welcomed by the rejoicing populace as the bringer of good fortune.

Aziz was a very different man from Mejid. He was powerful, healthy, a daring rider and an experienced cattle-breeder, who lived modestly and contented himself with only a few women. He owed his early popularity, however, to a negative quality: his dislike of all things European and of all forms of progress. He expressed his hatred of the West so loudly that his ministers were constrained to observe, "Sire, one feels it, no doubt, but one does not speak it!" The ministers were thinking of the urgent need for fresh loans; they were thinking that the European passion for lending was abated and that oaths do not bear interest. New methods were needed to attract money from the West, or else the Sick Man would die beneath the sceptre of this new ruler whose very robustness of physique impelled him to believe in the unique destiny of his own country, and induced in him a fanatical turn of mind.

The Paris World Exhibition in 1867—six years after Aziz's accession to the throne—afforded an admirable opportunity for non-committal and confidential meetings with European capitalists. It was to be an international "Festival of Peace and

Industry," a "Demonstration of European Solidarity." Buyers and sellers all over the world were hoping to increase their business at this great parade of modern industrialism. Politicians were to encounter the reality of world-brotherhood in the light of the new methods whereby railway-lines and telegraph-wires were to spread over the entire face of the earth. With steam and electricity bringing men so close together it was easy to believe that no room would be left for hatred and misunderstanding.

Although the invitation sent by Napoleon III was couched in the most flattering terms, it won no response from the Sultan. He regarded it, on the contrary, as an insult. No Sultan had hitherto entered a foreign land except as an overlord, a conqueror. Was the Shadow of God now to display himself as one among many? When the Emperor went on to mention that many other emperors and kings, and a swarm of princes, would be visiting Paris, he displayed thereby Europe's lack of understanding for the proprieties. Nevertheless, his ministers urged the Sultan to make the journey. Many were afraid of revolution in the provinces if the financial situation grew worse. So great was their anxiety that they now drank their excellent Turkish coffee out of cups of rhinoceros-horn, a traditional safeguard against poison.

In their despair the ministers turned to the highest religious authority, the Sheik ul Islam, and this lofty spirit propounded the following solution: Every foot of earth trodden by the Sultan became the Sultan's property, and it was for him to distribute it to his vassals. In the eye of heaven, therefore, there could be no objection to the proposed journey to France. Aziz might journey across the whole of Europe if he chose, distributing it as he thought fit.

But if heavenly objections were thus disposed of, the earthly difficulties attending the preparation of this Arabian Nights excursion were innumerable. The question had to be settled

as to who should accompany the Shadow of God upon his journey. There must be men who understood the rigid laws of Mohammedan cookery and the slaughtering of animals to the accompaniment of appropriate sacred verses; there must be experts in the art of raising loans; there must be interpreters who could speak the French language, and, still more, the language of diplomacy, which was so foreign to the Sultan's fiery temperament. There must also, of course, be a decorative personal suite, for the Lord of All Believers knew what was needed to impress the mob of unbelievers. And finally, it was necessary for certain persons to accompany the Sultan, not because their presence served any useful purpose, but because it was undesirable that they should be left in Turkey during his absence, perhaps to enter into conspiracies behind his back.

The Crown Prince Murad, the Sultan's nephew, was the first to be "invited" in order to avoid complications of this nature. In token of recognition he was obliged to sign a document in which he undertook to perform no action during the journey against the will or against the person of the master. He signed it with joy. No price was too high to pay for a journey to the West. Murad had a boundless admiration for Europe and the new age, with its progress, its technical achievements and its talk of the rights of man.

Abdul Hamid was also required to go, although there was no reason to suspect the young man, who occupied a modest dwelling with a few women and servants, of any political activities. Murad's joy at the prospect of the journey was enough in itself to influence his attitude. What Abel loves, Cain despises. As so often happened, Abdul Hamid regarded the matter in his own peculiar way: sulky, reserved, at the best indifferent. Perhaps in his piety he shared the view of all conservative Moslems, who saw in this visit of their prince to the land of unbelievers the final triumph of heresy.



H. Fox

ABDUL HAMID'S ELDER BROTHER, MURAD



H. Fox

SULTAN AZIZ, ABDUL HAMID'S UNCLE AND  
PREDECESSOR



and the destruction of morals, for which atonement would probably be made in hell.

The Sultan continued to view the journey without enthusiasm. In his dislike of all things European he was at one with his younger nephew, and together they were opposed to the Crown Prince. Sultan Aziz had greatly changed during the first six years of his reign. The hardy rider had become a debauchee, the modest cattle-breeder a seeker after pleasure. His harem already contained more women than had that of Mejid. But there had been no weakening in his hatred of Europe.

To distract his thoughts from the unpleasing prospect, Aziz was accustomed to take refuge in the glass pavilion in the garden of the Palace of Dolmabagdshe. Here he could find fulfilment for his newly acquired love of beauty. Architectural splendour now meant more to the awkward giant than any other pleasure, as though in the harmony of forces contained within the structure of a building he could find a balance which he himself lacked. And the glass pavilion offered even more: it afforded him a view over the Golden Horn, that incomparable blue arm of the sea with ships and small sailing vessels driving their ways across it.

The selection of the Sultan's personal guards was also influenced by his love of strength and physical perfection. One day he called to one of these splendid figures as the man marched up and down before the pavilion, bearing his antiquated arms which nevertheless looked impressive enough. "What is your name?" he asked. "And what is your pay?" The man's name was Fasul, and he received ten piastres a week. "You shall accompany me to Europe," said the master, "and your pay will be fifty pounds a month. You will call yourself a secretary." It was a joke after Aziz's heart—to turn the simple watchdog, who did not even know his alphabet, into one of the imperial secretaries. He began to look more fondly on the journey to

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Europe. At least he could inflict a humiliation on the Christians, with their modern outlook, their rigid official hierarchies and their tame-cat morality, by compelling them to do honour to an illiterate peasant youth as though he were a person of consequence. The protests of his ministers were unavailing. As the embodiment of primitive Asia, as a survival of the great racial migrations, Fasul visited the World Exhibition of the civilization of the nineteenth century.

The coming of the Sultan to France was awaited with great excitement. Although more than two centuries had elapsed since a Turkish Sultan had last appeared in Europe, on the occasion of the unsuccessful siege of Vienna, those earlier visits of the Turks were such as stayed painfully in the memory. This was the first time the Shadow of that alien God had come westward, not as a destroyer but as an honoured guest.

On July 28, 1867, the Havas Agency reported: "The town of Toulon is preparing to receive the Sultan. The Emperor has sent a number of gentlemen to greet His Ottoman Majesty. The squadron is anchored off the *rade*. Breastworks have been erected over a stretch of three kilometres for those of the populace who wish to witness the spectacle of his arrival." So great, indeed, was the interest that it was necessary to take special precautions to prevent the audience from drowning in its anxiety to see the show. Such was the reputation which the Turks had left behind after their previous visits. They were welcomed rather as wild beasts are welcomed by their recent victims, when they have been mercifully brought into captivity.

"He will ride on a horse which is a direct descendant of the mare of the Prophet Mohammed!" The excited French citizens must have been disappointed when the descendant of the Prophet, instead of riding, went from Toulon to Paris in an ordinary train. Nor did the thick-set, amiably saluting figure, surmounted by a modest fez, reveal any trace of exotic

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

brilliance, no glitter of gold, no yards-long twisted turban. The crowd described the fez as a "second-best night-cap." They fell back upon their modern scepticism, at the same time comforting themselves with the report that the fez and the Sultan's shoes were filled with sand from the Bosphorus in order that his sacred person might be isolated from all contact with the Christian world.

For decades Europe had been admonishing Turkey with the necessity of conforming to the times. When the Turks visited Europe, however, the Europeans looked at once for a manifestation of the ancient past, a Fata Morgana of Oriental fairy-tales. And when appearances disappointed, they went to the opposite extreme, assuming that their visitors were no different from themselves, and concluding that the technical marvels of the new age had indeed begun to make all things alike. Had they looked more closely at the faces under the fezes they might have been shocked to discover so much secrecy and remoteness; they might have perceived that it was the spirit of another age and world which stared at them through Turkish eyes. A fog of misunderstanding, contradiction and cross-purposes accompanied the Turks to Europe, affecting Turks and Europeans alike.

At all the receptions, parades of troops and other festivities, the red fezes of the Turks were to be seen. Again and again did the Sultan raise his hand to his forehead, giving the customary Oriental greeting which signified, "My thoughts are yours." In fact, however, knowing no French, believing from the first that no point of contact existed between himself and the world of the "*Giaours*," and having no desire to understand it, the Sultan had few thoughts for Europe. His only expressed wish was quite unpolitical: he wished to see as many pretty women as possible.

On the occasion of a military parade a French officer, acting as the Sultan's adjutant, turned to a boy who was always close

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

to the Sultan, and who was known to be his son, and more or less forced him to take a seat beside the master, believing him to be the Crown Prince. Questions relating to the strange world of Turkish family life were avoided by Europeans, since even a polite inquiry after the health of a gentleman's wife was regarded by the Turks as discourteous. It was not generally realized that the heir to the Turkish throne was not the oldest son of the reigning Sultan but the oldest male member of the Osman dynasty. However, even had the Sultan been capable of speaking a European language he would have done nothing to clear up this misunderstanding, for it was his dearest wish to make his son his heir over the heads (or over the bodies) of his two nephews, Murad and Abdul Hamid.

During a conversation with the Turkish minister, Fuad Pasha, Napoleon remarked: "How very different the two brothers are!" The Crown Prince Murad was the uncritical admirer of everything he saw. Abdul Hamid was his deliberate, hostile opposite. The joy of living was displayed in Murad's sturdy body, and in his lively, candid face: with clothes, words and gestures he aped the Frenchman. The pallid Abdul Hamid, on the other hand, stared uncomprehendingly when he was spoken to. His interpreter constantly expressed on his behalf regret that he knew no French, but there was nothing in the expression beneath those sulky lids to suggest that the regret was profound. He kept as silent during this journey as he had during the games of his childhood, and in the Selamlık of his father. Silently he looked about him, sheltering behind his professed ignorance of the language: but actually he understood French and could even speak it quite well, as later events were to show.

Abdul Hamid saw the brilliant exhibition, not as a "show of human virtues," but as a display of the errors and weaknesses of the Europeans. Despite his apparent coldness and his lack of fondness for the customary self-indulgences of princes, he

had his ruling passion. His joy was in the shortcomings of mankind. To discover the helplessness of others was to feel the growth of his own self-esteem. He had learnt early enough, through his mother's life as well as his own, what it was to be dominated by others. Whenever a new situation arose, whenever an issue had to be faced, he became an expert in his own especial field: he became the watcher and listener, following the under-currents, exploring the shadows, seeking for flaws and loopholes amid the dark labyrinth of the human spirit.

It was during the visit to Europe that he began to take to heart what was later to become one of his principles of government—the principle embodied in the Latin formula *divide et impera*. By affectionately inviting his brother to breakfast, with the intention of upsetting the “modern” Murad’s digestion, and thereby his temper, he sought to sow discord between the Sultan and the Heir Apparent, the two men who were of most account in his life.

Since Turkish custom did not permit women to be taken on the journey, the Sultan’s pleasures were for the time being confined to those of the table. No less than sixty hard-boiled eggs and meat approximating to a couple of lambs were placed on his breakfast-table, and he was gratified by the astonishment which his remarkable appetite evoked. Perhaps he regarded the superhuman capacity of his stomach, like the barbarity of his “secretary,” Fasul, as simply another witty way of disconcerting the Europeans. Or perhaps the short, stout man—a “typical Turk,” as he was called in Europe—needed the familiar atmosphere of dripping meat and wood-smoke to support the humming dynamo of his powerful body amid the turmoil of European festivities. At all events, his exaggerated vitality, his immense natural gusto and the atmosphere of excess which he spread around him separated him from no one more than from Abdul Hamid, who ate little and

without demonstration, and was as disdainful of food as any puritan.

The young French officer appointed to be Prince Abdul Hamid's escort found himself with a heavy task. Although he did his best to show his eagerness to please, emphasizing his good will with looks and gestures, that unyouthful, Oriental boy's face continued to lower over the loaded tables, almost with an air of suffering. An invisible shield—was it really an incomprehension of everything European, an incapacity for experience, a spiritual lack; or was it a deliberate recognition and refusal of all things foreign?—enclosed the young prince as he passed through the crowded ways of Paris. At military displays and theatrical performances, at brilliant receptions and amid the distinguished and elegant crowd that pressed to see the wonders of the Exhibition, he remained constantly aloof.

In later life Abdul Hamid showed himself to be a masterly listener. His phenomenal memory, equalling that of a professional memory-expert, was a constant source of amazement to those who came in contact with him. After a lapse of many years he would accurately repeat conversations at which he had been present. Every political figure he encountered, however casually, and every opinion expressed by one man of another was recorded in his mind as faithfully as if it had been committed to paper. Viewed in retrospect it would seem that he derived especial benefit from the Paris Exhibition. It was here that he first encountered the strength and splendour of the newest Great Power, Germany. One picture especially remained in his mind: it was that of the Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia taking his five-year-old son (later the Emperor Wilhelm II) to see the giant Prussian cannon, a fifty-ton symbol of the victory over the ancient power of Austria, who in the previous year had yielded up her leadership of German destinies at the battle of Sadowa. As later events were to show, the silent Turkish prince was not unmoved by

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

the respect accorded on all sides to Germany, her new military might, her newly stirring industries, her new railways which had played their part in the recent victory. The idea of Germany was henceforth to be inseparable in his mind from the idea of enormous, indestructible power, just as the name of Europe was to be synonymous with discord.

From his childhood he had learnt to read the meaning of small portents, and this ability went far to compensate for whatever was lacking in his knowledge of French. Many things were revealed to him in Paris. He perceived the anxiety of the hospitable French when the German Crown Prince was too long in conversation with the Czar of Russia. Since Germany was now a Great Power the traditional friendship between Russia and Prussia had come to assume an ominous aspect for the West. But he saw how France and England continued to bicker despite the danger. English newspapers and even English visitors described the Exhibition as "humbug," and the French retorted no less bluntly, but at greater length and with an acid wit. A French comment on Anglo-French relations—"When we hated them they treated us with indifference: now that we no longer hate them they are beginning to despise us"—was not forgotten by Abdul Hamid.

He saw the importance of industry in the new life of the West. In the immense, elliptical central space of the Exhibition a display of the newest machinery roared out a massive symphony of steam. A new word came to his ears—oil. What was it? Since he disliked asking direct questions he listened to the current rumours. "In two hundred years the English will have used up their entire oil reserves. The world consumption of oil increases from year to year." Abdul Hamid had the Oriental view of time, and two centuries seemed to him a trifle. So the English—the dominant English!—would presently be faced by a shortage of oil! The fact was stored

away. Nothing remained more clear in his memory than the weaknesses of others.

The report of the shooting of the Emperor Maximilian of Mexico, who had been encouraged to undertake his adventure overseas by Napoleon III's exaggerated passion for the system of monarchy, cast a shadow over the rejoicings in Paris. What were the Turks to make of it? An emperor had been executed: and the potentates of Europe, strutting as though they were the lords of creation, ordered three weeks' official mourning and were otherwise helpless witnesses of the event, quarrelling among themselves about it.

The Emperor of the French, surrounded by kings and princes, stood upon a dais richly adorned with gold and purple and royal insignia, and spoke of *La France, grande, prospère et libre*. But the people of France did not hear his discourse, for the eighteen thousand seats in the immense hall of the prize-giving were reserved for notables, for the aristocratic and the wealthy, who drove up with uniformed lackeys in high-wheeled, gold-glittering carriages, as though they were arriving for a *fête galante*. A "festival of work" was planned, a parade of universal brotherhood. In this show of science and machinery, designed to impress foreign princes and financiers, and to win fresh customers for the exhibiting captains of industry, a few workmen were plainly necessary as a decorative item. So they were idealistically displayed, marching past at a respectful distance from the royal guests, like a column of statistics in their Sunday best. Nothing was said, however, of the growing bitterness in the workshops, the growing rebellion against ruthless exploitation. In 1866 the workers of all nations had formed an association at Geneva, the First International. But the term "social democracy" was not popular in Court circles, and in the Exhibition of 1867 the social problem was barely hinted at in the models of workers' houses, designed by the Emperor himself, and in the

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

display of *marchandises à quatre sous* intended for the masses.

"Our ancient Europe is still true to the principle of Monarchy. We revere the human qualities of which it is the symbol." Thus did Abdul Hamid hear them talk in Paris. But did the Turks understand the part they played in this great gathering—the reviled and scolded Turks! They were there not only as learners but as teachers, in order that the presence of the Shadow of God might help to secure the principle of monarchy in Europe.

Silently as he had come, the pale young prince left Paris, the results of his observations locked in his heart. He had seen that Europe was not all-powerful and not united, and that the greatest power within it was not the power of any single man, of an ideal or of a faith, but the power of money. He had seen that many of the new factories, portrayed as the "mills of happiness," stood idle; that Europe possessed more goods than men, and that the vitality of this modern world was undermined by the constant fear of war.

And what impression did he leave behind him? Certainly at the time not many people paid any attention to the inconspicuous younger brother, who seemed to be no more than a part of the Sultan's train. But among those in Paris there were many who ten years later would recognize in that insignificant figure the wirepuller in international business, the "great invisible," whom they would increasingly detest for his remoteness and strangeness. Nothing in that Exhibition, no person and no new invention, was to be the source of more strange and potent energies than the "Red Sultan," who was sometimes referred to by his contemporaries as the "evil spirit" and the "antichrist." Observing that taciturn figure, as it moved on this one occasion so harmlessly among them, they might well have looked again had they known what the future was to bring.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

The Sultan journeyed from Paris to London. He was received by the English people without enthusiasm, and even with dislike, because of the persecution of the Christians in Turkey. Of all the peoples of Europe, where a renewed fondness for authority had recently displayed itself, the Belgians and the English alone proudly retained their love of liberty. The British Government did not hesitate to warn the Sultan on the occasion of this visit that three manifestations of his domestic life would be unacceptable—slaves, eunuchs and harem women.

Only in the City did the Turks receive a warm welcome. The bond of many financial transactions already united them to the gentlemen of the City, who hoped by the splendour of their reception to stimulate their clients to invest still more capital in Turkey. Without realizing it, the Sultan and his two nephews were made the leading figures in a financial campaign.

And then came a high-point of the European journey, a red-letter day in the history of Turkey. The Sultan visited a feminine ruler! "How magnanimous is our Lord," said the Turks in Constantinople, who were following events with the most intense interest, "that he should permit a woman to be his Viceroy in England!" There were still people in Turkey who believed that all foreign monarchs were the Sultan's vassals. Queen Victoria, the English "viceroy," allowed scarcely an hour for her official luncheon to the Shadow of God. Feeling that the grotesque situation should be brought to an end as quickly as possible, she made excuses and withdrew to Osborne, while an express-train bore her visitors from Windsor back to London.

The Sultan, however, seized the occasion of a military display to embody for a brief while the European dream of the magnificent and turbulent East. He appeared mounted on a charger, glittering with orders, crowned with a tuft of heron's plumes held in a diamond clasp, and followed by a troop of

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

richly-clad, barbaric riders who purported to be Albanians, Tunisians and Circassians. It is hard to say whether this exotic outburst was inspired by the fierce arrogance of the steppes or by the cooler calculations of the diplomatic lobbies.

A gulf of centuries, as well as the gulf of climate, lay between Turk and Briton. Since the Middle Ages the British had trodden a long, hard road upon which the Turks were only now setting their feet. They had passed through tumultuous changes: from Catholic mysticism to Protestant rationalism, from a patriarchal village life to the life of factories and cities, from dynastic quarrels to world-politics. The Turks, with their sensitive intuitions, were most impressed by the prevailing atmosphere which was the outcome of these internal stresses: that unique, transcendent blending of order and freedom, resulting in a harmony which made itself gratefully felt but was not easy to imitate.

This atmosphere seemed to have its effect upon the Sultan, for after a banquet at the Guildhall His Majesty informed the guests through his interpreter that the purpose of his journey was "to complete the work of civilization in Turkey, and to strengthen the relations between Turkey and Europe." And a few days later he went so far as to receive a number of engineers in order to hear their opinion on the building of railways in the Turkish mountain districts.

A naval review off Portsmouth on August 17th marked the climax of the visit. England wished to impress him with her sea-power, partly in order to demonstrate to the Oriental despot that even a "modest" constitutional monarch could make a display of pomp, but above all to check any desire he might have to come to terms with Russia against her.

The Turks then set off on their return journey through Germany and Austria. A trip along the Rhine moved the Sultan to express his especial gratitude. Never had he seen so much water: it positively embarrassed him to think of the

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

enormous trouble to which the King of Prussia had been put to prepare this lordly vista for his guests. In fact, he genuinely believed that the River Rhine had been constructed in his honour! Perhaps for all his outward sobriety Sultan Aziz still cherished in his heart intimations of a mythical princely power which could literally move mountains.

In Austria the traditional Turkish enemy was greeted as the victim of a kindred destiny. Following her defeat by the Prussians, Austria was in her first year of separation from Germany. With Turkey she was the last of the empires by Divine Right, dying Titans whose limbs, the nationalities which aspired to become independent nations, were threatening to fall away from them. The Turks had to contend with Serbs, Roumanians, Bulgarians and Armenians, the Austrians with Hungarians, Czechs and Poles. The scientific nineteenth century was also the epoch of political materialism, and those monarchs who by heavenly authority asserted their power over foreign races were threatened by the new force of nationalism. Race and blood seemed to have become mightier than the power of the spirit.

So the living monument to the principle of the Divine Right of Kings, the shadow of God—a short, fat man with a small fez—appeared with his escort at the Palace of Schönbrunn, and was received by the Austrian Court with especial ceremony that the people might learn what was due to a prince appointed by God. And having accomplished this last duty the Sultan was at length free to return to his own country. A flotilla, decorated as though it were a flower-show, bore him on his homeward journey down the Danube.

During his absence blood had flowed in Turkey. There had been battles with the Greeks, who were striving to emancipate themselves from the power of the Crescent, and with rebel Slavs in the Balkans. In Constantinople itself conflict had only

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

been avoided by the timely discovery of a conspiracy aimed at nothing less than the establishment of a new régime. The conspirators were known as "Young Turks." They desired a constitutional government with a parliament on the European pattern. No sooner had Aziz escaped from Europe than he found himself again confronted by Europe—the spirit of Europe—in his own realm.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE RISE TO POWER

THE Sultan's journey to Europe had failed in its chief purpose. The Europeans had been lavish with compliments, but not with loans. The Turkish cupboard was bare, although taxes were increasing and ten thousand peasants had been removed from their fields to sit idly in the debtors' prisons. The currency had fallen to one three-hundredth part of its nominal value. Printing-presses worked more busily than the State officials, who were deprived of three months' salary in the year, the Government preserving appearances by reducing the official calendar-year from twelve months to nine.

Even this did not solve the problem of a balanced budget. For most Turks this growing poverty was an insoluble problem. During more than six hundred years Turkey had maintained a great position in the world, vanquishing innumerable enemies, and showing herself, more than most nations, mistress of her destiny. But the birth of "capital" in the nineteenth century had confronted her with an enemy more deadly and insidious than any she had yet known.

Life had hitherto been very simple in Turkey. The subject races had paid fearful and regular tribute. The army, consisting of Christian youths pressed into service, had devoted itself with a monkish singleness of mind to its task of fighting the battles of the Sultan, its one source of livelihood, and had drawn no pay for doing so. War itself, with its attendant loot,

had been a paying business. While these circumstances endured the Sultan had allowed a free hand to the provincial governors, who justified themselves in office by the sums they forwarded to the capital, where little thought was given to the state of growing neglect in the provinces. The bitter deprivations of millions of suffering people had served to provide a fat living for a few hundred thousand town-dwellers—business men, tax-collectors, high officials—and above all for the inhabitants of Constantinople, whose rich families supported an army of no less than fifty thousand servants. Any governor who failed in his remittances to the Sultan was himself the recipient of a missive: he received a silken cord, the polite but irrefragible order to end his life. By this means the royal exchequer ensured for itself a double contribution, consisting of the estate of the late governor together with the premium paid by his successor for the “loan” of his office.

In the nineteenth century this grimly idyllic situation collapsed, and a state of affairs ensued which by the new standards—those of capital and social conscience—was one of chaos. Turkey would cease to draw breath if new sustenance, in the form of finance, were not forthcoming from abroad. Fundamentally this was nothing new, for she had never been self-supporting. Foreign money had always poured into Constantinople. It was the form that had changed. What had once been tribute or war-booty was now transformed into loans.

The Sultan was forced to submit to every indignity, for his army was powerless against the highly equipped armies of the West. He could only improve its efficiency by the purchase of modern weapons, and to do so would be to add immeasurably to the already vast extent of European imports. Armaments would swell the stream of railway and telegraph equipment, marine engines and agricultural implements, which was already followed by a stream of Europeans who came to instruct the Turks in the use of the new appliances and to find as many

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

new uses for them as possible. Nor could the growing need for money be met by the impoverished peasants in the backward lands of Turkey itself, the less so in view of the fact that the possessing classes, the priesthood and those in Court circles, were immune from taxation. Whatever attitude Turkey might adopt towards Europe, whether she was friendly or hostile, she was dependent upon the new forces to which Europe had given birth.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the appearance of a man who claimed to be a master of strategy in the battle with capital, and whose deeds seemed to bear out his claim, should be greeted with rapture at the Sultan's Court. His first shrewd manœuvres were enough to show that Mahmud Nedim Pasha was the man of the moment.

"Why," he asked, "should the traffic on the Bosphorus be left to the Europeans?" He had no difficulty in winning the support of Sultan Aziz in a matter which struck at the Europeans and brought him a profit. Thenceforward Turkish craft sailed between those softly swelling coasts which led, at Constantinople, to the idyllic mingling of the eternally separated continents; and the Sultan was enriched by a new source of revenue.

Without marvelling at this unexpected gain, the Sultan smiled upon his new adviser as though he were a conjurer. The humble secretary became a minister and then Grand Vizier, and his breast sparkled with orders. Mahmud Nedim was, indeed, a man after Aziz's heart, a man of abounding energy, with grasping hands and no exaggerated finesse.

The Europeans, finding their profits reduced, were forced to take notice of the new growth of Turkish sea-traffic, which was not confined to the small trading flotilla on the Bosphorus. When Turkey placed orders for a number of large modern ships the English shipbuilders felt not only the satisfaction of business men but also a glow of national pride. No one could

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

suppose that this sudden interest in shipping, after the return of the Sultan from Europe, was merely a coincidence. Evidently the Oriental mind had been impressed by the might of the British Navy!

Under the control of Mahmud Nedim the State funds appeared to be inexhaustible. He had simple methods of raising money. No sooner did a ship arrive in Constantinople from a foreign slipway than it was boarded at night by a party of men, who vanished into its interior. By the time these shadowy figures had finished their work of wrenching and rending nothing was left of the ship but an empty hull stripped of engines, instruments and everything else that had been its pride and strength. The dealers who waited silently at the quayside referred to these as "old iron," laying ignorant hands upon the fine, powerful objects. They bought them for a fraction of the price which Mahmud Nedim still owed the foreign shipbuilder. But the difference in values, and the robbery of his country, were trifling matters to Mahmud if by these means he could procure an immediate supply of ready money for the State coffers, lining his own pockets in the process and daily renewing the Sultan's favour.

Meanwhile Madame Pertevalé, the astrology-pursuing friend of Prince Abdul Hamid, was rejoicing in her position as mother of the Sultan. On occasions she bought as many as fifty costumes in a day, which she then distributed unworn to her slaves. This extravagance she described as "spreading happiness around her," and she considered that her hurrying messengers were altogether too slow in bringing funds from the Treasury. The spectacle was frequently witnessed in Constantinople of an empty carriage, drawn by fiery Arab steeds, galloping madly through the streets from the palace to the Sublime Porte and returning without passengers. When it became known that it was laden with money bitter curses followed its speeding wheels. But the Sultan gratified all his

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

mother's whims. He loved her. Perhaps he hoped that she was happy. He himself was the victim of depression and boredom.

Years had elapsed before Aziz's heavy thoughts had ventured beyond the golden bars of the Cage of Princes in order to form some conception of the state of affairs in his empire. Except for the visit to Paris, he never left his capital. He had seen none of his far-lying provinces and none of his subjects, except those who dwelt in the palace and visitors who were at pains to address him in the devout tones which custom demanded. Nevertheless, he knew more than his predecessor.

Despite the inadequacy of the telegraph-system and the insufficiency of official reports, these new developments had brought the provinces nearer to the capital. Strange news reached the Sultan. He heard that the peasants in Anatolia and Armenia were obliged to sell their children in order to buy flour to keep themselves from starvation, and that after two successive hard winters there was still no work and not even buyers for the children. Streams of peasants reduced to beggary were flowing from the vast, snowbound Asiatic hinterland towards the coast, littering the thawing roads with their corpses, dying of the unaccustomed warmth or being killed in conflict with better-nourished people who sought to stem this torrent of the starving. The fields, so long frostbound, now waited in vain for the hands of the farmer; houses were collapsing in the deserted villages, whole stretches of the empire were become a wilderness. Every winter saw a further shrinkage of the diminished life of the countryside, and nothing was left to the survivors but the tax-burden of the dead. Beneath this increasing burden, tobacco cultivation, the ancient silk industry, and sponge fishing were ceasing to be profitable and falling into disuse.

After learning of these things Sultan Aziz abandoned his efforts to understand affairs of state. He could make nothing

of the reports of famine in Asia, rebels in the Balkans, conflicts between Christian and Moslem, or of the new proposals of foreigners to build streets, railways, water-systems and schools for State officials. The overwhelming mass of things he had not seen and problems he could not solve filled his mind with confusion. The gigantic task confronting the ruler of Turkey—nothing less than the conversion of an empire containing millions of souls from the Middle Ages to the present day—was altogether too much for this robust giant.

He had been a normal man, limited in intelligence but rich in vitality, when as a prince he had lived the life of a landed proprietor; but the countryman turned Sultan had plunged into a life of excess. There were already nine hundred women in his harem (a figure reached by none of his predecessors), and they bored him. So did the three or four hundred guests seated daily at his table, who stifled with inordinate quantities of food every capacity to think, to reason or to plan. The Masters of Ceremonies found it hard to please him. His only pleasures were those which he himself contrived. A favourite game was one in which cocks and hens were the royal playmates. The thick-necked man laughed himself blue in the face when the poultry ran clucking over the unencumbered floors of the palace, and with a great fluttering of wings got entangled in the hangings. Chasing them through the richly decorated rooms, he would catch them and hang the highest orders about the necks of the cocks. The palace dignitaries had to take care that no cock lost its order, and that the distinctions conferred upon them, recalling the great days of Turkish history, remained clearly visible.

Softly it was murmured that the Sultan was growing feeble-minded. But his antics were too deliberate to be the outcome of mere imbecility. Unable to infuse new life into his country, he was drugging the life that ran so strongly in his own veins. Finding himself unequal to the gigantic tasks of his office,

which indeed he could scarcely envisage, he withdrew from the terrifying prospect into private life; and as though even the life of a grown man were now too exacting for him, he made himself into a child. In this inverted sense did his vitality drive him, to abandon not only the pride of a ruler but even the pleasures of maturity. He hid himself in a world of his own fantasy.

Another favourite distraction—perhaps a deliberate mockery of himself, of his surrounding world, of Europe or of all three—was a game with soldiers which differed from a children's game only in its extent and extravagance. Detachments of troops were brought in the afternoons to the palace. Down in the cellars there would be great activity. The shutters would be closed, and presently a muffled sound of shooting would pervade the gardens and the sea-girt landscape. The sounds would at times grow weak and intermittent, and then would gather themselves together into disciplined volleys. At length silence would fall and smoke-blackened figures would return to the daylight, to be taken rapidly on board the vessels which awaited them, and to vanish into the first twilight which hung like a golden veil over the enchanted seaboard of Constantinople.

The Sultan accounted for this farcical procedure by explaining, sometimes in the presence of Europeans, that his soldiers were practising European warfare. Thus did he show how little attention he paid to European affairs, and even to the grimly earnest Franco-Prussian war. He had not the strength to depart from the traditional ways or to absolve himself from the past, which still loomed so large in Turkey; nor was he strong enough to oppose the new spirit of the times which was causing so much confusion in Turkish affairs. His perfect inadequacy in the face of his imperial task and of Europe resulted in a tragic caricature of Europe and himself.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Meanwhile the Crown Prince Murad lived in a quiet country house in Kurbalidere, remote from the senseless tumult of the palace, his despair growing as his life was frittered uselessly away. Since custom forbade him to play any part in State affairs he devoted himself to the education of his children.

He had selected Kemal Bey to be the instructor of his five- and six-year-old sons. The young poet, who was not only a master of Oriental literature but had also received a Western education, found himself reduced to the role of a schoolmaster respectfully endeavouring to teach the royal children their alphabet. He had no means of restraining them when, growing disdainful of his presence, they ignored his teaching and returned to their toys, and he experienced painful moments whenever their father entered the room.

But this situation underwent an unexpected change. Kemal suddenly perceived the possibility of acquiring a new pupil—none other than the Crown Prince himself. Beginning the lessons as usual, but without urging the children to any great efforts, he would abruptly change his theme: the spelling-primer would give way to world-history. By gradual degrees, at first as though it were a matter of casual conversation, the nursery school-hours were transformed into a series of considered lectures on the more important phases of the history of Europe, above all the great revolutions. The word “revolution,” however, was not included in the vocabulary of Kemal Bey, himself one of the spiritual fathers of the Turkish revolution. “Improvement” was the word he used.

The young poet talked and the youthful Crown Prince listened, both stirred by emotions that carried them beyond the prosaic boundaries of Oriental Court ceremony, and beyond the tragic confusion of the land. But in addition to these two, and to the children who played heedlessly at their feet, a third person came to be present at these strange and revolutionary occasions. Pallid, thin and taciturn, his big eyes

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

half-hidden by the heavy lids, his sombre face shadowed by the immense nose, Abdul Hamid crept in to join the company. He remained sitting or standing beside the two eager men, listened in silence, asked an occasional question, and went away again, punctually to return.

Murad was uncomfortably aware of the presence of his brother, who frequently visited him uninvited, but probably with the Sultan's knowledge, and whose eyes were everywhere. He was obliged to ask him to come again, for an unfriendly word from him to the Sultan would bring these lessons to an end. The relationship between the two brothers was already poisoned by money matters. Murad borrowed from Abdul Hamid and repaid him with interest and with malice. (He had recently been responsible for a production of Molière's *L'Avare* within the family circle, under the title *The Avaricious Hamid*.)

Kemal dared to become constantly more pointed in his lectures. The existing state of affairs in Turkey aroused him to fury. New insurrections were reported from the Balkans, where the Slavs refused to pay tribute and demanded their independence. The Sultan had sent troops against them, badly clad, hungry soldiers who received no pay. Discontent prevailed everywhere—among the Christians, among the Mohammedans, and even in Constantinople itself, where malcontents seldom ventured. Processions were formed. A deputation of holy men, two thousand white turbans, appeared in front of the royal palace and demanded the dismissal of the Grand Vizier, Mahmud Nedim, whose financial operations and shameful transactions with State property were ruining the land.

When in August 1875 the Sultan reduced by half the payment of interest to foreign creditors—a discreet indication of bankruptcy—the fury abroad was intense. European agents stirred up the perpetual fires of conflict between Moslems and Christians throughout Turkey, but above all in the predomi-





### **ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD**

nantly Christian Balkans. The Russian minister, Ignatiev, alone expressed to the Turkish Government his appreciation at the "measures of economy"—which he himself had probably inspired. Russia had seen a chance to achieve the bloodless conquest of Constantinople by bringing about a final separation between Turkey and the West: for what enemy could be more hateful to the West than a debtor who did not pay?

In the Crown Prince's nursery Kemal uttered the words "catastrophe" and "national bankruptcy." He said even more. Filled with crusading ardour the young poet was resolved to make the most of the unprecedented situation which permitted him to talk without restraint to the otherwise unapproachable princes; he was resolved to teach the sons of Osman something of reality. He was not destined to achieve his final aims, although he ran the risk of a death sentence, but he believed implicitly in the ultimate success of the liberal ideal. With an astonishing candour he revealed certain projects nursed in his heart, even producing a map of the town to illustrate what was nothing less than a hypothetical plan for an uprising. Thus did Abdul Hamid first learn the shape of the town where he was born, the capital of the empire over which he was to rule—from a map in the hands of a revolutionary who designed to overthrow the reigning Sultan.

With the closest attention he followed the guiding finger as it pointed out the streets leading to the palace, along which the revolutionaries, the trustworthy cadets of the College of Officers, would march (of course, only in theory) if the Sultan refused to dismiss his Vizier and continued to countenance the unscrupulous mismanagement of affairs. The hand crept closer to the palace, the fingers encircled it. Kemal smiled confidently and touched the map, indicating the façade of the palace, on its seaward side. "Whatever happens we can bring the Government down from this side with the help of the fleet. A single shot ought to be enough—a blank, naturally, just to warn

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

the Sultan we mean business. And if he still isn't convinced a well-aimed shell at that range could be made to do the trick without doing any other damage."

It happened, as though fate had preordained it, that enmity and hatred were the staple elements of Abdul Hamid's education. As a child at the side of his boycotted mother, as the unloved son of his father, as the constant antagonist of his brother, he encountered hatred and learned to return it; as the pupil of the temperamental, superstitious Madame Pertevalé he learned to use hatred as one of the arts of life, a means to achieve happiness and victory over others. Now he encountered the cold, logical hatred of the revolutionary. Hostilities, dangers, all the powers of evil filled his world.

They were strange discourses that the poet delivered beneath Murad's roof to the two first princes of the land, as though both were already his accomplices. Murad first revealed his sympathy when he checked the flow of Kemal's revelations. He was not disposed to trust Abdul Hamid too far. They evolved between them a secret language of amplifying nods and gestures, both believing that the taciturn third member of their counsels, who seemed at times to be lost in dreaming, would at the most only follow the spoken word. And at length Kemal returned in his lectures to the past. These manœuvres had ceased to be necessary. At a secret interview the Crown Prince had declared himself on the side of the revolutionaries, proclaiming that he shared their desire for a change of sovereign and a re-ordering of national affairs, and enthusiastically supporting the plan for a constitutional government and a parliament. And Abdul Hamid continued to keep his counsel, never revealing by a word or a gesture how much he had understood.

On May 29, 1876, the empty carriage of the Sultan-Mother made its accustomed journey to the Treasury. On this occasion,

however, it did not return at full speed but made a detour by way of the harbour. It drew up, still empty, near a ship which was making ready to sail. After a lively discussion between the coachmen and the ship's officers it was loaded with a number of heavily filled sacks, with which it returned post-haste to the palace. About a hundred thousand pounds in cash rattled over the uneven streets—a load of grief and bitterness.

The great sum had been painfully gathered together. Tax-collectors had scourged it out of the tight fists of peasants, and for all their cunning had been obliged to hand over the greater part to the provincial governors. The small people of Constantinople, impoverished tradesmen and craftsmen, had made their contribution. Their jealously guarded cash-boxes, containing savings scraped together during decades of self-denial, had been forcibly opened by the State, which compelled them to participate in a loan to meet the new danger in the Balkans, where the soldiers engaged in suppressing the rebellion of Montenegrin Christians were in need of boots and food.

And when at length the sum had been collected, at the very last moment, it was removed from the ship which lay with steam up ready to convey it to the waiting army, and was whisked off to the palace. Fury broke out in the districts surrounding the harbour. There were cries of "Robbery!" and "Blasphemy!" They were patient enough as a rule with the frivolities of the Court, but in this matter the Sultan had betrayed heaven itself, whose representative he was. It was as loyal Mohammedans and worshippers of the Heavenly Power that the unhappy people, feeling themselves no less betrayed, broke into curses and threats.

The leading ministers were obliged to decide upon a course of action if they did not wish to have action thrust upon them, or to find themselves deprived of the power to act, by a revolt in the capital. On the following night the Chief Eunuch was

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

shaken out of his sleep and required to perform the unusual duty of escorting a deputation of high dignitaries to the Sultan. He was ready to be consigned to eternal damnation before he would disturb his master. But the Sultan, whose pride in his abnormal physical strength caused him to scorn special precautions for his safety, was aroused by the sound of voices. He appeared in the doorway of the room.

His first reaction was one of frank incredulity. The deputation, who had been sent to inform His Majesty that his rule was at an end, were obliged to ask him to look through the window at the dense military cordon surrounding the palace, so that he might be convinced. The highest religious authority, the Sheik ul Islam, who alone was empowered to decide whether through failing wits or extravagance a sultan was no longer fitted to rule, had given judgment in one brief word. It was a sentence without appeal, the judgment of heaven itself. The man who an instant before had been the Shadow of God was now no more than a creature of flesh and blood like other men.

"Kismet!" said Sultan Aziz. "Fate has willed it." He seemed to compose himself and retired quietly to his own rooms, followed by a troop of armed guards, who took up their positions in silence. They were the witnesses of a harrowing scene. Alone in his room, beneath the eyes of these few from whom he could not escape, Aziz broke down. He clenched his hands and beat his breast. The immense body jerked and writhed, sweat appeared on the congested face, and harsh, inarticulate cries escaped him. He cursed no one, he reproached no one: it was not his way to find words and reasons. He blamed and punished his own powerful body, which was his pride, and in which he had felt so secure. It was a grotesque portrayal of the conflict between the body and spirit of a human creature, opposed in the grim hour of destiny and in revolt against their inseparable union.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

At the same hour Constantinople was the witness of an even stranger scene. It was enacted in the house of Prince Murad, for whom the time had come to enter the palace as the new ruler.

Murad had made his decision. He was resolved to take over the government. His mind was filled with glowing dreams of his country's future. But when the moment came for action, it took him by surprise. Dragged out of bed in the middle of the night, he found himself confronted by the Minister for War, Hussein Avni, in full uniform. His first instinct was to defend himself, for he assumed instantly that Aziz had defeated the plan to dethrone him, and that he was now the Sultan's prisoner.

The Minister for War delivered a formal report on the disorders in the town which had been caused by the forcible seizure of the money intended for the army, and on the need for taking steps without delay. The Russians must be given no chance to make a descent upon the leaderless Turkish capital; nor must the rebellious Slavs in the Balkans or the fickle Arab races be given any reason to doubt the strength of Turkish authority: otherwise they would be threatened by the very worst of perils, the fall of the Osman dynasty. But the Prince, generally so ardent a politician, only stared blankly, paying no attention to this grave discourse. In fear and trembling he begged for his life.

In order to get him as soon as possible to the empty palace, which was now his proper place, Hussein Avni drew out his two revolvers and thrust them into the hands which Murad held out in a gesture of supplication. "Your Majesty may shoot me on the spot," he said, "if you have any fear for your safety." For the first time Murad heard himself addressed as "Majesty." He had long yearned for this moment, but now he reviled it. With two revolvers in his shaking hands the man who was to infuse new life into Turkey was led like a terrified schoolboy to a waiting boat.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

The two craft bearing the incoming and the departing Sultans passed each other as they travelled in opposite directions across the waters of the Bosphorus. The terror of death and the terror of life hung like escorting shadows over these two sons of the tragic Osman dynasty. The wailing of the women who accompanied Aziz was plainly to be heard in the silence of the morning. Those who accompanied Murad had to prevent him forcibly from flinging himself into the water. The rowers bent their backs to the oars as though in accomplishing this short journey all obstacles would be overcome, and they would reach a haven of unassailable safety in the vast, shimmering Palace of Dolmabagdshe.

Was it a hysterical fear of failure at the instant of success, a passing nervous crisis at that dramatic moment when supreme power or utter extinction hung in the balance, which caused Murad to behave as one distracted? Or did the trouble lie deeper? Was his sudden terror when power was within his grasp due to his fear of power itself, the burdens, the immeasurable complexity of the task confronting the ruler of Turkey who sought to save his empire from collapse and dissolution?

Before the night was past Sultan Aziz was installed in another bed in a house in the old "Seraglio," while a new master had entered the Palace of the Sultans. And on the morning of May 30th the people of Constantinople were aroused out of their sleep and their many cares by the firing of a hundred-and-one-gun salute. The reign of Prince Murad, the popular Murad, had begun.

Stands were erected for the spectators of the enthronement of the new Sultan in the streets running from the palace to the Bayezit Mosque, where in accordance with ancient tradition the ceremony of the "girding on of the sabre" would take place; and every blow of the hammers seemed to invoke a

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

blessing for the new ruler. A confident and jubilant multitude filled the town. First among them was the British ambassador, Sir Henry Elliott, with whom the Minister of Justice, Midhat Pasha, the most modern of modern Turks and the most liberal of Liberals, had extensive conversations. It was intended to remodel the Turkish administration after the English pattern, with a constitutional government, a parliament and ministerial responsibility. England alone, the most western of the Western Powers, the highest, most harmonious expression of European civilization, was now considered good enough to serve Turkey as a model.

But the third day of Murad's reign—his official inauguration had not yet taken place, although he was already regarded as Sultan—brought ominous news. The dethroned Sultan had suddenly died. Aziz was found with opened veins on the floor of his room. This grim discovery was followed by an act of naked violence. A Circassian officer, Hassan, forced his way into a meeting of ministers and shot the Minister for War, who died without being able to refute the charge that he was guilty of the murder. After a brief tumult Hassan himself was bayoneted by the guards and subsequently hanged, and for a time the threatening question of who was responsible for the fatal wounds on Aziz's wrists remained in suspense.

A eunuch brought the report of his uncle's death to Sultan Murad as though it were a matter for the liveliest satisfaction. In order to be first with the good news he rushed with it into the bathroom. Murad promptly fainted. "Those madmen have murdered him!" he cried in despair; and scarcely had he recovered consciousness when he asked, "What will Europe think of it?" Since he appeared to be not fully in possession of his senses a council of doctors was held. It was considered extremely remarkable that he should mourn the death of his predecessor—a dangerous rival so long as he lived—as though it were the dearest of his friends who had been torn from

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

him. Could it be that in his heart Murad had regarded Aziz as a possible haven of refuge, a means of escaping from the Sisyphean labours that must attend the re-birth of Turkey?

The doctors had their work cut out in these days. In addition to watching over the ruling Sultan, they had to attend to the body of the deceased ruler: and the treatment of the dead called for more elaborate ceremony than the treatment of the living. Only certain portions of the man who had once been the Shadow of God might be touched by profane hands. A number of huge-turbaned divines watched with sharp eyes, ready to cry halt when professional curiosity showed a disposition to stray from the arms and breast to the carefully covered lower body. The masters of the Holy Writ saw to it that there was no blasphemous unveiling.

Accordingly the doctors, after this limited investigation, announced that the deceased had committed suicide. The first news received in Europe of these events was conveyed by the secret message of an English newspaper correspondent, who telegraphed: "The doctors have had to bleed poor Jane, Cousin John has taken over the business." "Poor Jane" was Aziz, "John" was Murad. The sensation of the royal suicide was an absorbing topic in Constantinople and throughout the Turkish Empire, and it crowded the telegraph-lines to Europe. It was said that the Sultan had borrowed a pair of scissors from one of his wives. He had trimmed his beard with them before a mirror, and shortly afterwards had been discovered lifeless on the floor, the blood still flowing from the opened arteries of his wrists. This picture, grisly as it was, of a powerful man destroyed by so humble an instrument, nevertheless afforded the Turks a certain satisfaction. They had a fondness for the powerful and the dramatic, and many felt themselves ennobled by the thought that Aziz had been so steadfastly resolved to die that even a pair of scissors had been sufficient for his purpose. Thus they accorded him a certain admiration,

although during his reign so many had known nothing but suffering.

Yet another duty fell upon the famous doctors of Constantinople during these days when the business of government seemed to consist principally of medical consultations. After proceeding from Dolmabagdshe, where Murad was in residence, to the even more splendid Palace of Tscheragan, which sheltered the lifeless body of the late monarch, they went to the simple country house occupied by Prince Abdul Hamid, who upon Murad's accession had become heir to the throne.

Outwardly no change was apparent in Abdul Hamid's daily life. He had expressed a desire to continue living in the isolated little house near the gates of the city. But a swarm of trades-people now appeared before his dwelling. Carpets were spread upon the seashore, silks and jewellery; vessels of precious metal and rare furs were displayed beneath the spring sun. For days they lay in wait, watching for a chance to offer their goods, but not one succeeded in passing the threshold. Finally they withdrew, having had no opportunity either to invoke blessings or to quote their monstrous prices; they went off, taking their splendid baggage with them, and cursing the man who had not rewarded their ardour and their loyal devotion with so much as a look. There were even some who praised the dead Sultan for his love of beauty and his noble extravagance.

The new Crown Prince closed his doors to all beauty and luxury. He admitted only words—a form of goods not easy to weigh or measure, but which were weighed and measured with the utmost care in that youthful head. Numerous people now visited him—ministers, officials and courtiers as well as the doctors. They were grieved to discover that every word they uttered was recorded by a secretary. It was not customary to keep written notes and exact records in Turkey. They would have been still more surprised had they known that every item of information which Abdul Hamid caused to be written

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

down was carefully filed. The secretive young man, with his abnormally small and feeble hands, was amassing a new source of power. One room in his house, instead of being furnished with the customary divans, was filled with cabinets in which the files grew daily more numerous. They contained reports from visitors and confidants to which were added the Prince's own notes. Confessions and avowals, plots against enemies and for the betrayal of friends—a whole gallery of human weaknesses and vices was neatly classified and collated.

Abdul Hamid knew how to make men talk. Parsimonious in other respects, he could be extravagant with presents and gifts of money when he wished to get words in exchange. His acute psychological sense enabled him to perceive the moment when a man was the victim of his own weakness, the ambition bursting into flame, or the secret, vain desire. With the sure touch of one familiar since childhood with the dark recesses of the human soul, he could stir up a slumbering desire for vengeance, or, on the other hand, a desire for atonement. Sometimes a purse of money would change hands: but on other occasions revelation would be met with a significant smile, with a melancholy glance of the big, dark eyes which he seldom opened completely, but which concealed within their unusual intelligence and seductive charm the mystery of a personality.

Among other things he learned that his brother, despite the state of his health, proposed to give a banquet. It was to be a family affair, at the end of which Murad hoped to be the only surviving Osman prince! In Turkey, where the political murder of relatives was a customary procedure, such a rumour sounded in no way improbable. Abdul Hamid saw to it that the suspicion was widely spread; and the banquet was not held. Thereafter it was said that Midhat Pasha, the Minister of Justice, was extremely distressed at the cancellation of the banquet, more particularly in view of the state of

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

the Sultan's health. Finally Midhat joined those who declared Murad to be incurable, and who held that he should be replaced. Whether he really believed in Murad's illness or whether he had come to think more highly of Abdul Hamid is not known.

With his deep voice lowered in sympathy, Abdul Hamid inquired after the Sultan's health both of the doctors and of the Ministers of State who were his constant visitors. He referred to him as his "unfortunate" brother, and he was full of understanding for the progressive policy of the new Government. But Midhat's proposal, that he should become provisional head of the Government until Murad was restored to health, was unexpectedly rejected.

Abdul Hamid met this first call to the throne with an unqualified refusal. He declared that a regency, involving the simultaneous existence of two sultans, was contrary to Mohammedan religious law. Accustomed since childhood to wait and to bear himself with patience, he did so now, when only one last step separated him from the power he so passionately desired. He intended, when he did possess it, to do so wholly and unassailably. The torments of uncertainty and of disappointment had been borne in upon him during his early, sensitive years, and he desired security. Perhaps it was security, above all, that he sought in his quest for power.

Meanwhile, in Turkish Government circles and among the European ambassadors, opinion concerning Prince Abdul Hamid was beginning to take shape. But it was contradictory, affording no clear picture. Some passed superficial judgment, deducing his character from his outward aspect, and concluding that the fragile, subdued young man could be made into a useful instrument for their own purposes. But his carefully maintained reserve caused others to adopt the opposite view and to credit him with unusual energy and self-will. No one, however, penetrated into the strange, conflicting depths of his nature.

When he was rid of the doctors and politicians Abdul Hamid entered upon another side of his life. He entered into communion, not with a human being, but with a wax doll whose features crudely resembled those of Murad. The young man, who a short time before had been shrewdly cross-examining his visitors, now pursued the arts of black magic as he had done as a child in the apartment of old Madame Pertevalé. The small hands, generally so controlled, feverishly grasped the puppet in its neat officer's uniform and riddled it with pin-pricks. All the pent-up will-power concealed beneath his customary silence was loosed in the passionate, rapid murmuring of runes designed to inflict upon Murad the curse of an incurable illness and to banish him for ever from the throne. These interludes of sorcery—excursions into the outer darkness of the human soul—seemed indirectly to afford Abdul Hamid the strength to resume his quiet and rational poise when next the doctors and politicians came to visit him. They afforded an outlet for nervous energy, so that he could lay his thin, anaemic body down in peace.

He entrusted this puppet-Murad to the devoted Sheik Abdurrahman, who, retiring to a remote room in the cellars, intoned one litany of damnation after another. Never for a moment was Murad released from the evil spell. The flow of objurgation continued day and night as the Sheik, with all the ardour of his desire for self-preservation, implored the heavenly powers to fulfil the promise he had been rash enough to make—that Abdul Hamid would be the new Sultan, and that he would reign for forty years.

Meanwhile the people anxiously awaited the news of Murad's restoration to health, the ceremony of the girding-on of the sabre and the spectacle of the Sultan's ride through the decorated streets. But the first report, that the Sultan was suffering from a minor indisposition, was followed by painful rumours that his mind was deranged. During the nights a

cold wind blowing from the Black Sea and the Russian steppes caused the gaily painted and decorated stands to creak as they stood on the main thoroughfare, awaiting the great day. The unseasoned wood, erected for hasty use, was not improved by the long period of waiting. It was scorched by the heat of the day, and spotted by rain. Children played among the tiers and galleries, and ownerless dogs used them as a lodging-place. The citizens of Constantinople went gloomily past the decaying structures from which they had hoped to witness the birth of a new happiness.

The feast of Ramadan, a mingling of fasting and festivity, was at hand. The public appearance of the Sultan was essential, but Murad's mental state was such as to make it doubtful whether he would be capable of showing himself even in silence, or of responding to an ovation merely with a bow. There was the danger that at any moment he might be overcome by terror. A slight sound, even a glaring colour, was enough to cause him extreme agitation. While talking quite reasonably he was liable to spring up in terror of "white mice," and to burst uncontrollably into tears. The doctors had tried in vain to dispel these phantoms from his mind.

Thus it came about that on the morning of August 30, 1876, about three months after Murad's accession, the people of Constantinople were again awakened by the sound of a hundred-and-one guns. Turkey had received yet another Sultan. Abdul Hamid had at last agreed to succeed his brother.

On September 7th the new Lord of Turkey—thin and ugly, very quiet and very earnest—stood in the Bajazet Mosque, where the great and splendid rulers of the great days of the Crescent had received God's blessing and had been girt with the sword of Osman, the founder of the dynasty, as a sign that it was their task to spread the religion of Mohammed,

to shed the blood of Christians, to reach to Paradise by the conquering of new lands. With great dignity he walked the prescribed seven paces towards the sheik of the howling dervishes of Konia, whose privilege it was to gird the sabre about the body of God's vicegerent and to bestow a kiss on the left shoulder of the man who in that moment was raised above common humanity into the sphere of unearthly beings. Then, as the Shadow of God, he performed his first act of grace. He took three steps towards the Vizier, the representative of the people, in order that the people, in the Vizier's person, might kiss the hem of his garment. Seven paces, three paces, a few small gestures—sacred symbols of a profound and ancient significance. . . .

Only a few people, all of them men, were privileged to assist at this solemn inauguration—priests, dervishes and men of learning, intoxicated with wisdom and piety; and in addition a few pashas and Ministers of State. No sound broke the unearthly stillness except that of the beating wings of the doves which a pious tradition allowed to nest in the courtyard of the mosque.

One might suppose that such a moment would exclude all human weakness, all prosaic, everyday preoccupations. Nevertheless it is possible that one mundane matter, at least, was not absent from Abdul Hamid's thoughts. He had been required before the ceremony to sign a letter in which he declared himself ready to relinquish the throne should Murad be restored to health. Where was this letter? He must have been at more than usual pains to guard his expression, lest it betray his hatred for Midhat, the originator of the pernicious document, who had thus wrung from him an avowal that he did not enter unconditionally into power. In order not to shock the more conservative spirits it had been agreed to keep the existence of the letter secret, for a regency was contrary to religious law. What were the possibilities of getting hold of

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

it? A search must be made at once at the Ministry of Justice—at all the ministries. This was certainly one of his earliest decisions—a first show of authority, directed against the men who had summoned him to power!

When the ceremony was over the new Sultan rode through the streets of his capital, still festooned with the decorations which for three months had awaited another man. The stands were only thinly occupied. Many windows overlooking the route were closed. The Turkish people, generally so easily moved to enthusiasm, received Abdul Hamid coolly and with mistrust. They had expected great things of the popular Murad, and they allowed his substitute, of whom they knew nothing, to feel their disappointment. On this great day of his life, when he had still done nothing good or ill, Cain stared into the face of a hostile world which had welcomed Abel with a smile.

Gravely, stiffly, he rode through the indifferent streets as though he were riding through a solitude, his hook-nosed face very pale. As though drawn on by invisible powers he trotted steadily towards the destiny which had so unexpectedly brought him to the eminence of the Shadow of God upon earth, while the sad shades of his predecessors, who had so tragically failed in the titanic task of governing Turkey in a changing world, went silently before him amid the mosques and minarets of the beautiful town.

Dolmabagdshe awaited him, the white palace by the sea. But there, too, was only solitude. The mother was lacking, the "feminine reflection of the Sultan," the one creature who, by Turkish tradition, might stand beside the master. Abdul Hamid had missed his mother for twenty-seven years.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE MASTER BUILDS HIS HOUSE

L OVELY not only in itself but a masterpiece in its situation, Constantinople reached out from Asia to Europe, an eloquent witness to the greatness of a Turkish ruler. But this happy approach of two continents, the triumph of nature and of man, did not long endure. The face of Europe was soon changed to one of defiance of its mighty neighbour. The soft earth rose up into mountains, into frowning battlements of granite. In the narrow valleys, on the bare plateaux, between the sheer mountain walls, remote and deeply rooted in their surroundings, lived the people of the corner of Eastern Europe known in its picturesque entirety as the Balkans. It was with an air of rejection that this beginning and end of Europe, which was now only loosely and fragmentarily held by Turkey, looked out upon its master.

The Turkish Sultan had over-run the Balkans, with its intermingling of Slavonic races, during his triumphant progress in the second half of the fifteenth century. Every fifth year he had drawn from this western march a rich booty of Christian youths for his army, but otherwise he had allowed the Slavs, Greeks and Jews who inhabited the land to live according to their own customs. An extraordinary tenacity characterized the Balkan peoples. Even Rome had not been able to rid them of their ancient racial identities and convert them into citizens. Open rebellion against the Turkish

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

authority was, however, for a long time impossible. They were forced to submit, first to the blood-tax, and later, when the Turkish wars of conquest ceased, to not less oppressive taxation in goods and even in money.

The first hope of release from the Turkish oppression was associated with the name of a great general who was not a Slav but a hero of Austria—Prince Eugene of Savoy, the renowned conqueror of the Turks. Russia soon added her voice to those from Vienna, which since the end of the seventeenth century had urged the Slavs to rebel against Turkey. The spirit of freedom which inspired the French Revolution, the young American Union, and the years 1830 and 1848, spread to the Balkans and flared up, delayed but the more ardent, as the sons of well-to-do Slavonic merchants began to study in Western schools. The overwhelming majority of the Balkan people were primitive peasants, but the wandering goat-herds and the students with their knowledge of modern doctrines were one in their love of freedom. By the year 1826 Serbia and Greece were vassal-states, bound only by the compulsion to pay tribute. Their governors were soon to become hereditary princes. In 1852 little Montenegro, with the support of France, acquired the right of separate administration and its own native-born prince; and in 1862 Prince Charles of Hohenzollern became the ruler of a united Roumania. Only Bulgaria, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Albania remained in undiminished dependence upon Turkey.

But the laws of Nature still prevailed in the Balkans, whether they were ruled by Slavonic princes or by Turkish pashas. The new forces of science and enlightenment had not reached to the depths of those valleys or to the mountain-peaks. Life still went with the seasons. As summer approached the men, wearied of the winter's idleness, went out again on to the land: but the green harvest of the fields and meadows was preceded by a red one—a harvest of blood. No sooner did the

first green show upon the earth than their pent-up energies were turned to conflict, fights between neighbours in which families and races were opposed. Old feuds broke out with a renewed violence, new ones were engendered by the ravishing of hearth and women and the strips of cultivable earth, often thinly scattered over rock. So harsh was the face of Nature in many places that only the strongest had the right to live, and violence was extolled as the fulfilment of Nature's own law.

In the years 1874 and 1875 these small conflicts between family groups were expanded into open warfare on the part of the Balkan Slavs against the rulership of the Turks. The corrupt and incompetent administration in Constantinople had increased both the weight of taxation and the hope of the Slavs that they might at last achieve complete independence. As the summer of 1876—the year in which Abdul Hamid II came to the throne—drew to its close, the unrest in the valleys of Bulgaria, still the most securely bound to Turkey of all the Slavonic peoples, steadily increased. As a rule the wild pillaging of the spring and the labours of the summer months subsided into lethargy during the winter; but this autumn the conflict continued, and whole valleys ran with blood.

Never had any summer brought so many strangers high and low into the Balkan lands. They were men of different types, travelling different routes, and they took care to avoid one another. If the mules which bore them over the crags of that difficult country could have spoken, they might have betrayed important political secrets. They might have mentioned that the priests of the Greek Church were better riders than their Mohammedan confrères. A trained soldier does not allow his seat to be disturbed by a flowing *soutane*; and the greater number of the Orthodox priests who came to inquire into the spiritual health of their fellow-believers were in reality soldiers of the Czar, who had judged the accession of

the young Sultan to be a suitable opportunity for the livening up of Russian propaganda among the Balkan Slavs. The army of turbaned *mullahs*, however, spreading unostentatiously through the land, bore witness to the young Sultan's unexpected combativeness. For the Moslem priests were no less political agents. Penniless students, beggars from the capital, ne'er-do-wells and pickpockets were thus enabled to turn an honest penny and enjoy a holiday in the mountains. Christian and Moslem peasants lived side by side in every valley. So into every valley went the *mullahs* and the bearded priests, making propaganda for their Masters, Christ and Mohammed, each of whom was on the lips of his own advocates the one true God, and whose representatives upon earth were the Czar and the Sultan.

But in addition to the men of God a third kind of visitor appeared among the Bulgarians in that same summer. Tax-collectors swarmed among them as never before. The new Sultan insisted upon the regular payment of tithe on field and stall. His collectors, creeping restlessly over the land, were the unconscious accomplices of the Orthodox priests and of Russia.

The slow-witted Bulgarian peasants perceived that no sooner had they struck down one of the Sultan's tax-gatherers than another appeared in his place, as though sprung from the earth, and distrainted on their last cow. Forgetting the mistrust with which they had been wont to view all who did not bear the face of their next-door neighbour, they humbly kissed the hairy paws that were thrust at them from the folds of the *soutanes*: for these hands offered not only money but—unbelievable happiness!—loaded rifles. "Brother," came the murmur from behind the false beard of a Russian sergeant-major, "we come to free you from the Turkish yoke." And since the Moslem priests also distributed arms to the Moslem peasants (often identical with the Russian arms, products of the same

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

factories in Western Europe) there was soon scarcely a village in the Balkans which had not its armed formations. Like dazed and goaded animals the Christians vented upon the nearest Moslems their hatred of a distant Sultan who demanded taxes and prayed to a strange God: and their fury was reciprocated. For centuries the followers of the two creeds had lived side by side, helping each other in moments of adversity, each respecting the piratical daring of the other in the universal conflicts of the spring. But now those of opposite faith were deadly enemies.

The splendid new rifles did not long satisfy them: they wanted the fever of battle itself. They drew their own blood to show their readiness to take arms against the "others", and the lists of warriors drawn up by the writers were signed in blood with Crescent or with Cross. The fever of combat stirred their simple minds to inventiveness. They filled the ditches with brushwood and wrestled upon the piles, the more intoxicated by the scent of wood and earth, until the weaker was laid low and roasted to death by the flames which the stronger lighted. The village streets were ringed with the red of flames and blood, and the flames rose up to the mountain-peaks to indicate the next place of combat. So rapidly did the restraints fall away upon which a stable existence had been founded, so deeply were their instincts still rooted in a past when mankind in the forests had needed to employ a pitiless ferocity to maintain itself in the face of unpitying Nature!

The telegraph bore the news of the uproar in the Balkans to the Western world. Europe received it as though it were an unheard-of revelation, and the phrase, "Bulgarian massacres," entered into common currency. Christianity shivered at every act of violence to which the people of its faith were subjected. Meetings were held in England at which the citizens expressed their indignation that the Turkish Government should tolerate such horrors. Appeals were sent to Queen

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Victoria, as though, having shown so strong a sense of order in her own country, she could somehow procure better conditions in Turkey. Mr. Gladstone lent his name to this wave of moral indignation. From the beginning of Abdul Hamid's reign his figure loomed as that of a mighty opponent. His hatred, born of a powerful personality, of a vast political programme and of a perfect lack of understanding for its object, was a threatening shadow destined always to lie across Abdul Hamid's path.

But it was not the hatred of any one man, or of any single opponent, which troubled Abdul Hamid after his accession to the throne. It was the eternal tension between the extremes of East and West, the gulf of climate and of the human spirit. The old crusading ardour of the West was reinforced by the hostility of Christian financiers towards the defaulting Moslems. The old enmities found a new name. The Christian world proclaimed its fury in the name of Progress and Enlightenment, in the name of Liberalism.

This fury was concentrated upon Abdul Hamid himself when he came to the throne, unexpected and therefore unwanted in his own country. The tumult in the Balkans found its echo in Europe in a single voice of accusation directed towards the young monarch, whose heritage was one of vast debts and moral bankruptcy, without regard for the circumstances, and without considering how far Abdul Hamid might truly be held responsible for the state of affairs in the land he was to rule.

In this situation two courses were open to him. He might escape from the grim reality, withdraw from politics as his father and his uncle had done and, exerting those privileges which belonged to an Absolute Monarch up to the moment of catastrophe, create for himself a cloud-cuckoo world in which to take refuge; or he might turn a bold face to

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

fortune, striving with all his power to reshape it according to his will.

Abdul Hamid was resolved to do his duty. He did not disdain to sit at the same table with high officials and officers, a hitherto unheard-of condescension on the part of a Sultan. He went personally to visit Government offices and barracks. He was consumed by a desire to know everything that went on in his vast realm.

But except for small departures tradition held him in its grip. Ancient custom did not permit the Shadow of God to travel or to meet men upon common ground. The ruler of Turkey and Khalif of Islam must preserve an attitude of semi-divine aloofness. In order that he might deal with mortal men the Audience had been devised, the ancient Court ceremony which had so little to do with truth or reality.

Those who came to the Turkish Court for an audience were led through so many and splendid apartments that they were apt to lose full control of their faculties. When at length the final door was opened they were dazzled by a light shining directly into their eyes, betraying all their painfully suppressed nervousness. Then came another terrifying moment: an utter silence proclaimed more loudly than the firing of a salute that they were in the presence of the All-Highest, the Shadow of God. But the Sultan, more shadowy than any shadow, was not at first to be seen. Only by degrees did the eyes discern the figure of a man standing in a corner of the great room, a window behind him, his face in half-darkness. A dark, knee-length coat covered his slight figure without elegance. The fez, the invariable headgear of the Moslem, appeared abnormally large above the pale narrow face. A single gleam of light shone from the jewelled order at his throat. The beard which an imperial prince was required to grow from the day of his coming to the throne, deep black against the sallow skin, re-

vealed by its sparseness how short a time it was since his accession.

A strange atmosphere prevailed in the room in which he ordinarily received his guests. No one could approach him closely, for he stood upon a small carpet which no other foot might tread. He stood rigidly like the simulacrum of a God upon this altar, as though surrounded by an impenetrable, invisible barrier. The men who stood nearest him, their coats glittering with gold and bedecked with orders, the high dignitaries of an immense empire who far exceeded him in years and girth, dared only to breathe fitfully while they remained within the circle of his breath. Their attitudes were an apology for the fact that their bodies, frail instruments of their utterly subjected souls, should take even so much liberty. No chain could bind a prisoner more securely than the inner discipline which kept the arms of the highest servants of his Turkish Majesty crossed upon their straining breasts. Never did they dare to exercise man's right to hold his head erect. Every back was bent beneath the weight of the Presence. And when they were called upon to speak, or to translate the words of a foreign visitor, they showed their respect by doing so in whispers.

Such customs and many others had prevailed for centuries at the Court of the Turkish rulers. In earlier times foreign visitors, envoys of the European nations, had been compelled to wait for days at the palace gates for an audience, and then, aping the pattern of Turkish humility, had crept forward with their eyes to the ground, bent double and very nearly on all fours, into the presence of the "King of Kings." "A *giaour* begs for the privilege of kissing the dust on his Majesty's shoe"—so ran the official formula. The privilege was bought at a high price. Should the gifts brought by the "ungrateful Christians" be held to be insufficient, they were consigned to a special prison maintained for the purpose of these diplomatic interludes, there to consider what better offerings they might

bring when next they ventured to sprawl in the dust at the feet of God's Vicegerent. In those great days of Turkey, foreign visitors and Court officials had rivalled one another in subservience to the Sultan. But that state of affairs was past. Courtiers and guests were no longer fellow-suplicants playing their allotted parts. They had become rivals. Exaggerated forms of courtesy were still observed, but no day went by that did not bring with it visitors uttering complaints, warnings and threats.

The men who appeared at the edge of the Sultan's carpet were of many kinds. They were the emissaries of every section of the people and of all the many provinces of the vast empire. Times were bad for all of them, and with the coming of a new master they expected to see an improvement. They expected him to perform the action of a god and not of a man—to wipe out with a gesture the happenings and the wastage of centuries. It was a grotesque situation: a man was credited with the powers of a god, but his worshippers, disloyal and mutinous, uttered not prayers but demands and threats. The paradox of an epoch of change was revealed by their demand for their human and social and national rights, while at the same time they retained their faith in miracles.

Many Christians were presented at Court: priests in splendid robes, well-versed in courtly procedure; and in addition to these an entirely new type of Christian, young men in shabby Western clothes, their heavy, peasant features ravaged by too much study. These young teachers, writers, doctors and lawyers were Slavs from the Balkan valleys who had studied at Western universities. They were consumed less with learning than with a fanatical faith in the rights of their peoples. It was hard to remember even the names of the different kinds of Slav. The young Sultan, uninstructed as were all Turkish princes, must have seemed to himself to be making new discoveries when he learned of the existence of Macedonians,

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Montenegrins, Bosnians, and so many others. Hitherto these people, for centuries Turkish subjects, named after their valleys and their patriarchs, had been as much a part of their immediate surroundings as the plants and animals which varied from valley to valley. But now they called themselves "nations", and not only demanded legal and fiscal equality with the Mohammedans, but desired to have their own schools and officials. They even went so far as to threaten to fight for their complete independence.

The Sultan listened amiably to all requests, even those of the Christian Slavs. He proposed to send out commissions to examine the state of affairs—but slowly, slowly. He had no use for this Christian urgency, this Western hustle. Nor was it difficult for him to avoid coming to a decision. Other figures appeared at the edge of the carpet—Arabian sheiks and the leaders of Circassian and Kurdish tribes. They reminded him that he was not only a Western ruler, and not only the Emperor of thirty-five million Turks, but above all the Khalif, the religious head of hundreds of millions of Moslems in many kingdoms, and that they looked to him to preserve the ancient privileges of Islam in its relation to the Christians, which the last Sultans had dared to undermine.

Abdul Hamid was better instructed in the history of his forebears than in the geography of his empire. Among the legends which had stirred his childish imagination was the story of Sultan Suleiman III, who had caused the heads of his highest officials to be tossed over the walls of the Royal Palace as a sop to public opinion, which had been excited by the attempted reforms of a too progressive Vizier. And apart from these fortifying recollections there was his personal leaning towards the Asiatics, the dignified men in their coloured, flowing robes, mellowed by ancient tradition and the eternal Eastern sun. Dextrous with words as with their tall, wiry bodies, they knew how to utter threats.

The peoples of the Western countries were divided into political parties, but no such simplicity prevailed in Turkey. The current labels, "Liberal" and "Conservative," did not begin to define that network of conflicting interests. Life flowered chaotically, like the undergrowth of a virgin forest. Not only Europe and Asia appeared before the Sultan, but the spokesmen of many heavens—patriarchs of the Greek Orthodox Church, Catholic bishops, Jewish rabbi, and, above all, the white-turbaned holy men of Islam. The constant appeal to different gods brought every small political request within the danger-zone of fanaticism. And even this was not all. Turkey was made up not only of different climates and different faiths, but also of differences in time. Between the citizen of Constantinople and the wandering Kurdish herdsman lay a gulf as great as the gulf between continents or between epochs. What man could be so many things to so many men? The desires of all these worlds, of an empire embracing Asia, Europe and Africa, jostled at the edge of the gaily coloured carpet upon which the young man stood, so insignificant in appearance and still untried.

Abdul Hamid's task, in which he displayed the greatest ability, lay in the need to achieve a balance between opposites, to avoid friction, to play off hostile elements against one another—above all, *to gain time*. He knew the hot temper of his people and the variety of the conflicts which could not by any means be instantly resolved into harmony. He approved the introduction of new laws, but postponed them again and again if he feared that they would call forth too violent opposition on the part of any section of the public. In promising reforms and not carrying them out he was betraying not so much Europe as himself by a belief in his own permanence.

But when there was no possibility of postponing a decision, when supplicants could not be put off with soft words and promises for the morrow, he abandoned his urbane manner

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

and swung round as suddenly as a weather-cock. He knew no mean between softness and brutality, between promise and ruthlessness.

He wished to be feared. Was this but another mask of a great artist in deception, or did those outbreaks of fury strip the veil from a nature constantly in torment? Although still a young man, he was already world-weary. His harsh childhood, the dark intrigues which attended his coming to the throne, and his experience of the fall of three Sultans had shaken him. He was pursued by fears of the premature ending of his rule, of dethronement (there were some who still referred to him as the "usurper" who had elbowed Murad out of his path), of failure and assassination. The form of life to which a Turkish ruler was condemned, living remote from other men in the prison of his golden cage, from which no journey could give him a change of view, and into which no natural laughter or the spontaneous words of a friend ever penetrated, was in itself enough to weaken the strongest nerves. In addition to this, Abdul Hamid did what no Sultan had done for centuries: he worked to the point of exhaustion. His hands reached out at five o'clock in the morning for the first of the numberless reports that were laid before him. He realized that the audiences were not enough to bring him all the information he needed of his empire, and so the written reports piled up, several bags filled with documents being brought to the palace every day. The Mohammedan religion regarded sundown as a sacred time of rest: but scarcely had he finished with the prayers, the ritual ablutions and a short meal, than he sent again for his officials and resumed his labours. He was apt to be threatened by a nervous crisis when told that there was nothing new, and that no closely penned document lay waiting on his table.

His consuming desire was to preserve himself and his empire. He had an extraordinary need of activity. It was as

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

though he needed to justify again and again his hardly won existence in the world and on the throne; as though only the pressure of reality could drive out the shadows that tormented his soul, the dark memories of the past and the awful fear of the future.

He also wished to be in constant, close contact with his high functionaries, for he profoundly mistrusted them all. There were men among them who had overthrown his uncle, Aziz, and who had removed Murad from the throne. Was it impossible that what had happened twice should not happen a third time?

There was Midhat Pasha, the Grand Vizier, first minister of the empire; the "modern man" of Turkey, who was even popular in the Balkans. He it was who had procured from Abdul Hamid that ominous undertaking to abdicate in the event of ex-Sultan Murad's return to health. This letter, despite the ceaseless search of innumerable spies amid the archives of the different ministries, was still undiscovered. Some said that it was not to be found in Turkey, but that Midhat had sent it abroad, probably to England. The thought that such a document, casting a doubt upon his lawful divinity and more dangerous than any weapon, might be in the hands of a hostile Power, drove Abdul Hamid nearly from his senses. He urged his spies to renewed efforts, and gave them plenty to do. From every document which bore the title "deputy" after his name this horrid qualification was removed.

And when at length the last visitor had departed the Sultan withdrew to the Harem. Here hundreds of women awaited him, but he would sooner have been awaited by one. The infinite variety of the day was succeeded by the infinite variety of the night: but Abdul Hamid was no sybarite. The pursuit of pleasure disquieted him instead of bringing him relief. The many women, with their stereotyped caresses, caused him discomfort. In these restless, frustrated creatures it was very

easy for aversion to grow in the place of love. The Shadow of God desired none the less to be loved: and since one excess breeds another, the very distance which sundered him from the rest of mankind caused him to long the more for human warmth and nearness.

Shortly after his accession to the throne he ordered his minister, Rushdi, to come to him at a late hour of the evening. To Rushdi Pasha's intense surprise, the eunuchs who received him insisted that he should follow them into the royal Harem itself. The master, clad in a simple house gown, received him warmly and without ceremony, and put to him the request—the more surprising, considering the time and place—that he should become Grand Vizier. It was not an order but a plea. Rushdi attempted to refuse, knowing well the burdens of the office, and he found strength to do so while he remained alone with Abdul Hamid, the young man's soft, small hands warmly and almost tenderly enclosing his own. But suddenly other hands, even smaller and softer, were extended to the old man, and feminine voices (wonderfully melodious voices, such as Turkish women possessed by birth and training) flattered and implored. Rushdi had not suspected that from behind a large screen some of the Sultan's wives were following the conversation. Acting on impulse, or at a nod from their lord, they had come to turn the scale at a moment when the Shadow of God was as helpless as any mortal.

Thus Turkey received a new Grand Vizier. But Abdul Hamid's faith in Rushdi Pasha was not of long duration, for although he was a rival of the hard and calculating Midhat, he had also taken part in the plot against Sultan Aziz. It was a friend of his own that Abdul Hamid sought, and not merely the enemy of his enemy. In those solitary hours when the day drew to its end the longing for this unknown person grew in him.

It was December. He had been Sultan four months, and the doubt as to the duration of his reign still persisted. Not only were there constant rumours of Murad's early return to health and to the throne, but the belief in the collapse of Turkey, first voiced by Sir Thomas Roe, two hundred and fifty years before, had been caused to spread throughout the world by the calamities which had so recently befallen two of its sovereigns. In that December, in the year 1876, a large number of new visitors arrived in Constantinople. There were among them many of the leading figures in European diplomacy. They had travelled from London and Paris, Rome and Vienna, Berlin and St. Petersburg, to take part in a conference which was to discuss once again the reforms so often proposed for Turkey, and above all to bring about the pacification of the Balkans. The Balkans represented the most urgent aspect of that "Eastern Question" around which the views of the European Governments constantly and variously circled. For although the diplomats conversed together in French, each thought in his own language and they were far from being a band of brothers. While England put forward an extensive programme for the "Europeanization" of Turkey, and especially of the Balkans (autonomous administration for all the Balkan provinces, modern law-courts, Christian governors, and a share in the proceeds of their own taxation, but moderation above all things), Russia and Austria contented themselves with advocating minor reforms. Too much freedom was not wholly agreeable to the monarchy on the Danube, which was composed of so many nationalities; and the Czar regarded the Nihilists as the root of all evil.

The spokesmen of Europe who appeared in Constantinople that winter knew the heights of mountains and the names of races, they knew the kinds of crop which sprang from Turkish soil, and the kinds of animal which inhabited Turkish woods and valleys. They were admirably supplied with facts

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

and figures: but with all their titles and their great political reputations they were poor psychologists. They came to Turkey—uninvited—as helpers with preconceived views, and they knew nothing of the most important person in the land, the young Sultan.

Abdul Hamid's influence, not only as head of the Ottoman Empire but as the Khalif of Islam, could scarcely be overestimated. His intense interest in politics showed him to be in advance of his predecessors and kindred in spirit to the modern rulers of the West. It was the more remarkable since he had received no normal education and was of his own initiative, without encouragement and against the wishes of his *entourage*, seeking to play his part in affairs of State. This ardour should in itself have been enough to draw attention to him as an individual. A young man of thirty-four who has become the Shadow of God and is still ambitious deserves to be taken seriously, for since his efforts can no longer serve his personal ends they must be devoted to some wider task. But the conventional legend of the Sultan of Turkey was so firmly fixed in the European imagination that scarcely one of the visiting diplomats troubled even to test his intelligence. It was with curiosity, with contempt, and with an entire lack of comprehension that they thought of him as a man of the harem, surrounded by his horde of ravishingly beautiful women: a man who had scarcely learnt to read, fortuitously endowed with the powers of a god.

Among the European diplomats was Lord Salisbury, who had expressed the view that a wise man does not bargain, and who held that it was the duty of a statesman above all things to act as a brake. He further believed, as Lord Balfour did after him, that there were advantages in doing a stupid thing which had been done before, rather than a wise thing which had never been done. A man of such conservative leanings would

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

no doubt have been admirably fitted to deal with a Turkish Sultan of the traditional kind, whose instinct was to avoid any extreme change. As it happened, however, neither Lord Salisbury nor any of the other visitors had anything more than a formal audience with Abdul Hamid.

Exactly the reverse occurred. The foreigners, the self-professed saviours of Turkey, began their activities with a direct insult to the Sultan. They opened their debates on the reform of Turkey without including the Turks! Turkish ministers were only invited to take part when the Europeans had agreed among themselves as to their proposals—or better, their commands.

The consequences of this strange procedure were both rapid and startling. On December 23, 1876, two days before the Christmas festival which the foreign statesmen were compelled with sorrow to celebrate far from their native lands, the sounds of gun-fire echoed through the conference room. The gentlemen breathed more freely when they learned that these were only salutes, for the atmosphere attending their polite exchanges was heavily charged. Nevertheless a remarkable event had occurred. The salutes proclaimed the fact that the Sultan had conferred upon his country a new constitution, with a Parliament after the Western model. He had, in brief, stolen the foreigners' thunder and dismissed them with a gesture: for what sense was there in lesser reforms when he himself had decreed an entire new ordering of the State? For the first time in a hundred years Turkey had spoken a direct word to Europe, and the word was "no." It was as unforeseen as its consequences were unforeseeable. The outraged European diplomats took their leave.

Thus Abdul Hamid found himself ruler of an empire which, after long and painful attempts at rescue, had at length fallen into the situation feared by generations of Turks. Completely isolated, Turkey confronted an enraged Europe. What was to

happen? Would the united armies of Europe march upon Constantinople, chase out the Sultan and sack the mosques? What did the future hold?

The figure which in these days stood for "the terrible Turk" was very different from the robust and splendid beings, clad in silks and hung with weapons of gold, which in the remote past had been the bugbear of Europe. It was that of a man in a plain black coat. When ceremony required him to carry a sword Abdul Hamid made use of both his small, white-gloved hands to support himself against the hilt, which reached nearly to his chin. He was no conqueror, no cavalry leader. An air of officialdom hung about him, and there was something in his aspect akin to the cold, scientific spirit of the age. But more than this, his face differed profoundly from the fresh, powerful, fleshy faces of his ancestors. His big dark eyes were less openly audacious than audaciously cunning. Above all, there was that remarkable nose, starting out from the pale, smoothly curving cheeks like a brand upon him.

"The Armenian nose. . . ." Even the least jesting reference to the Sultan's "Armenian father" was severely punished: but nothing could destroy the rumour or prevent it from rankling in his consciousness. As though to convince himself as well as others that it was without foundation he became the more ardently Turkish, the more devotedly Mohammedan; and his rejection of Europe and the Christian world was the more sharply expressed. No doubt his refusal to accept European dictation was carefully considered, for not even his worst enemy could deny his sagacity: but the vehemence of his reply had its roots beyond reason in the depth of primitive emotion. That "no" which brought the long-prepared European Conference in Constantinople to an end—he himself had uttered it behind the scenes of the "Grand Council"—was no tentative diplomatic utterance but a passionate avowal.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

As will be seen, the single monosyllable was to become the programme of his life.

His lack of training in the art of government did not prevent him from taking the entire reins of government into his own hands. At a time of extraordinary difficulty he was the one man with the courage to undertake the whole responsibility. But it must be admitted that his boldness was certainly due in part to his measureless mistrust of all other men.

In the event he may be said to have been justified, for the situation developed in an entirely unexpected way. If logic and the force of public opinion were the sole determinants of political action, Turkey's defiance of Europe should have led to a combined attack by the European nations; but this "crusade" did not materialize. The lack of European unity, in which Abdul Hamid put his faith, proved more potent than European rage. Austria and France, both still suffering from their defeats by Germany, were in no position to go to war; and Germany herself, the newest colossus, had her own problems to attend to. Only England retained her strength unimpaired; but although Turkey now possessed no more bitter antagonists than in England, where Gladstone had referred to the Sultan as "Satan" and "anti-Christ," this fury was not destined to be transformed into warlike action. Material considerations turned the scale against it. During the twenty years since the Crimean War sea-borne traffic had enormously increased, and England had begun to import wheat from Canada and South America instead of from the neighbourhood of the Black Sea. She could therefore afford to regard with a certain indifference the extension of Russian power in that region. Thus the danger of a united onslaught proved to be negligible, but with its vanishing the danger from Russia increased.

Abdul Hamid passed his days as though there were no danger of any kind from abroad, performing the duties of an

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

expert official in the setting of an Eastern fairy tale. He studied with great care the draft of the new National Constitution, and although the Constitution itself forbade the ruler to act on his own authority, he added a short clause. It bore the unlucky number, 113, and it laid down that "the Sultan possess the right of banishment." His ministers allowed it to stand. Previous Sultans had not merely banished undesirable persons: they had had them murdered.

No sooner had this clause of the "free" Constitution been ratified than the Sultan began to put it into practice. Regardless of the threatening foreign situation he dismissed his most capable minister. One morning Midhat found himself denied access to the royal apartments. A minor official advised the hitherto all-powerful Pasha to betake himself on board a ship waiting with steam up on the waters before the palace. Without warning Midhat found himself on the way to Brindisi, an exile on the high seas, accused of being a revolutionary, of having conspired against the Sultan and of desiring to introduce a republican régime. Actually he had had no thought of a republic, and had simply contemplated a number of reforms: but he had obtained from Abdul Hamid that fatal letter before his accession. Midhat was only the first to go. He was followed by Rushdi Pasha, until then a favourite of the Sultan, but one who had played a part in the dethronement of Sultan Aziz and therefore an object of the royal suspicion.

Fear and political calculation were both elements in the business: the strange mingling of shrewdness and obsession which characterized Abdul Hamid's mind. And once this "purge" had begun it was extended until it became a mass-movement of exiles streaming out to the remotest parts of the realm. The Turkish Empire was still of immense extent, its distances the greater since it lacked modern means of transport. It was rich in places of exile, where civilization was nothing but a memory to torment the spirit while heat and thirst and

the desert winds tormented the body. Armies could lose themselves in the deserts, steppes and mountains. The strongest men were helpless in the face of those vast territories, so un-subdued in their primitive vitality that the Sultan could safely appoint his officials to be the governors of provinces, shower titles and wealth upon them, and leave them to moulder in some enchanting landscape where an excess of Oriental delights would undermine their moral fibre and rid them of the desire to conspire against him. Their voices did not reach to Constantinople, which was still the focal point of the empire, and with each successive banishing he felt himself more secure.

Thus, while seldom even crossing the threshold of his palace, Abdul Hamid moulded his environment according to his will. And first he rid himself of every man of independent spirit and critical mind, just as he had rid himself of the foreign diplomats who had presumed to take too great an interest in Turkish affairs.

"Is the Sultan becoming less industrious?"

The Court functionaries asked one another this question as the nightly invitations to the palace, which had so disturbed their rest, began to grow less frequent.

His day's work done, and the evening prayers and the evening meal disposed of, Abdul Hamid withdrew to his private apartments. But those last hours were not always passed in the Harem, as his ministers supposed. In contrast with the sobriety of the day, the nights often concealed activities invested with that touch of fantasy which was more in keeping with the general conception of an Oriental ruler. By darkness, and generally at a late hour, he had a horse saddled, and with a single servant galloped out as though upon an urgent mission. They entered a district situated behind the palace, scarcely one of the most beautiful parts of Constantinople. The road mounted unevenly until the houses began

to thin out and a wide and desolate space was reached, an unfriendly region where the rider had to keep a firm hand on his horse against the danger of a fall. At first it was irregularly dotted with flat stones, and later strewn with rubbish. The inscriptions on the stones were not legible at night: they were Hebrew epitaphs. The place was an old Jewish cemetery, and further on, where the confusion became even greater, there was a one-time burial-ground for criminals, honoured by no inscriptions. A prison for brigands, the most dangerous of Asiatic law-breakers, had once stood there. In order not to burden the enfeebled finances of the State it had been resolved to limit the period of confinement to two years at the most. Those who did not speedily escape or starve to death were quietly killed and dumped in the earth, until finally the prison itself collapsed in the growing maladministration, so that now nothing remained of this attempt at civic discipline except piles of rubble and the bones of men.

This unhallowed ground was the object of the Sultan's nightly excursions. It was a strange place in which to ride for pleasure. The need for relaxation would have suggested other routes. But Abdul Hamid was engaged upon a quest. He was looking for a site upon which to build a new home.

He already possessed many splendid palaces. The Sultans Mejid and Aziz had burdened the people with taxes in order to build up walls of marble and then pull them down again. The Palace of Tsheragan alone had cost £1,600,000, Dolmabagdshe £2,600,000. But it was precisely the richness, the vastness and the magnificent situation of his dwellings which displeased Abdul Hamid. He had not forgotten the poet Kemal's remarks about the possibility of a successful attack from the seaward side of Dolmabagdshe. He wanted small rooms where everything could be seen at a glance, less magnificent, but possessed of a quality which he prized above all others—that of safety.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

His first desire was to keep his project a secret. He had himself drawn the plans, outlining a series of buildings containing an irregular network of small rooms, corridors and exits by way of subterranean passages, some of which debouched far away from the buildings. He personally designated the site, and he urged the workers to make haste. The few people whom he considered worthy to undertake the work were not particularly expert builders. He had chosen them less for their ability than for their loyalty to himself. He did not intend that any untrustworthy person should be familiar with this dwelling. He wanted to feel safe in it, protected at last from enemies, traitors and assassins. And as he waited for it his courage grew. It might have been the first home he had ever possessed, as though his life had been passed, not in royal palaces, but without a roof over his head. No sooner had it begun to rise above the earth than he was down in the damp interior, feeling the stout walls.

On March 19, 1877, there occurred an epoch-making event, the inauguration of the first Turkish Parliament, as laid down by the Constitution. According to the holy teaching of Islam, which was also the repository of all earthly laws, every happening was predetermined by the Koran. Now, however, men were venturing to govern themselves in the light of reason. The world of the free will was coming into existence, a world still undiscovered by the Orient. And just as the landing of the first explorers in America was but the first step in a long and arduous process of discovery, so was the opening of the Turkish Parliament no more than a first step towards freedom in the East.

Its very appearance was disconcerting: a strangely-mingled company which must somehow become the expression of a common will. Many of the provincial deputies wore the ancient, picturesque garments of their locality, the flowing burnous and

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

veil, strange peasant jackets, old-fashioned weapons which were no more than decorations. Many of those from the more remote provinces—Turkish, none the less—found it difficult to follow a discourse in the Turkish language, being accustomed to their local dialects. More than a dozen different languages were to be heard.

The Sultan displayed his readiness to embrace all his subjects in the same paternal love by nominating an Armenian to the post of vice-president, and he made two Israelites his personal aides-de-camp. But he seemed to be inspired by brotherly as well as fatherly love when he appeared at the first parliament with two of his own brothers, whose presence aroused the greatest astonishment. The Turks were not accustomed to set eyes upon their ruler's brothers, who according to ancient custom were prisoners at the best, and generally candidates for early assassination at the Sultan's orders. But although this detail might be hailed as a step in the direction of progress, tradition still maintained its hold over the Turks. When the Muezzin rang out with its summons to prayer the Moslem deputies (only forty out of a hundred and sixteen were Christians) sprang from their seats and hurried outside. No political discussion, however progressive and weighty its nature, was sufficient to counteract the influence of the priests.

Those first deputies, indeed, made little distinction between what was more and what was less important. The matter of building a tramway-system in Bagdad took up more of their time than questions of far greater urgency for a nation populated so largely by nomads and highwaymen. For the first time in the existence of the Turkish Empire, inhabitants of a large number of its different regions had come together: and they made the shocking discovery that things were going badly for all of them. They immediately protested against the heavy expenses of the Court; but their unanimity reached no further than this. Quarrels followed in rapid succession as individual

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

provinces, which had hitherto regarded themselves as separate worlds, clashed with one another. The Sultan remained a spectator while they expended their energies, less upon complaints directed towards himself than upon mutual recrimination. He hated them all, but above all he hated those bolder spirits who cried loudly in the Chamber that Murad was not mad.

But this strange and possibly dangerous farce of the first Turkish Parliament soon began to lose its importance. The attention of the nation was turned in a new direction: a Russian army had crossed the Turkish frontier. Despite the tireless eloquence of General Ignatiev, who was known as "the father of lies", Russia had not succeeded in bringing France, England, Germany and Austria together in a united front for the purpose of finally disposing of the Sick Man on the Bosphorus. And so, a few months after the ending of the Conference of Constantinople, Russia marched alone. It was possible that her isolation was partly the result of Abdul Hamid's policy: but it remained to be seen whether his political adroitness would be equal to the task of winning Western Europe to his side.

## CHAPTER SIX

### WAR WITH RUSSIA

**I**N the Hagia Sophia a mural painting of Christ enthroned lingered as a reminder that this edifice, before it became a mosque, had been a Christian church designed to surpass in splendour all the churches of Rome. The Mohammedans had made repeated efforts to paint out the picture, but the colours always shone through. During the period of their triumphs the Turks had paid little heed to this Christ who would not be suppressed. They were warriors and not philosophers, world-conquerors before whom kings and emperors bowed their heads. What did they care for a solitary face of coloured stone? But as their victories grew less frequent they remembered the defiant picture. They spoke of it as of an evil omen, a rearguard of Christianity holding its ground in the conviction that some day Christian rule would return.

And they remembered it in the spring of 1877, when a seemingly inexhaustible flood of Russian troops came streaming through the Balkans. An increased hatred, that dangerous spur to exaltation, was mingled with their prayers.

The face of Christ shining through its chalky covering haunted the Sultan. He gave orders that the Moslem women should veil their faces more heavily, that they should not enter shops and should avoid all contact with Christians. A return to the ancient customs, a turning away from Europe,

was the order of the day, reinforced by a propaganda of hysterical self-adulation and hatred of all things foreign. For some time after the European diplomats left Constantinople, the European quarter, with its modern shops and hotels, and the prevalence of European attire and of the French language, had continued to give a first impression of Western civilization; but in this fateful hour the true nature of Turkey broke through, sweeping away the atmosphere of modern culture. Constantinople became Asiatic overnight.

They were fateful days. The collapse of Turkey seemed imminent. Nevertheless the capital, accepting events with the ancient fatalism of the East, was far from despairing. On the contrary, the threat of an immense hostile army produced a national reawakening such as had not been witnessed for many years. Processions marched through the town. Inspired by their priests, the Turkish people turned a bold face to the war. This unexpected moral fibre was the first fruit of Abdul Hamid's understanding of the nature of Mohammedanism and of the East.

Constantinople became the gathering point of soldiers from every corner of the empire on their way to the Balkans. They were not so much trained troops as warriors of the old pattern, accustomed to form themselves into bands when battle was joined, but stubbornly resisting any encroachment upon their individual liberties. Tall tribesmen, their feet bare in worn sandals, strode over the unfamiliar city pavements, displaying chests matted with hair beneath their open jackets. An arsenal of pistols and knives adorned their belts, and although their heavy shields and inlaid rifles were scarcely the equal of modern weapons they made a powerful appeal to the imagination.

So much lawless vigour shone in the eyes of these Asiatic youths, from beneath their strange helmets and from behind their visors of hanging steel-net, that the European ambassadors besought the Sultan to forbid them to enter the European

quarter. The Sultan made a show of treating the request with the greatest consideration, while at the same time he showed his contempt for those who made it: newly arrived Asiatic troops were billeted in the neighbourhood of his own palace, and he sent his own orchestra to entertain them. He even went so far as to visit them in person, and watched their wild dances with evident pleasure. Was the proverbially timid Abdul Hamid in no way alarmed by these powerful, primitive creatures, or by the unleashing of violence that might at any moment lead to mischief? They had never left their mountain eyries and deserts except for war and pillage, and they found it hard to understand that in this war, which had brought them so far from their homes, there was to be no fighting and no plunder until they came face to face with the Russians. With empty pockets they ate and drank their fill in the restaurants and cafés, and they took what they wanted from the shops without thought of payment. They referred to Pera, the European district, as the "pig's quarter," and to its Christian inhabitants as "the herd"; and these designations, rescued from a long oblivion, were once again adopted by the polite inhabitants of Constantinople.

Every effort was made to send them off as rapidly as possible on their further journey to the front. Owing to the insufficiency of roads and railways the transport of troops from the eastern Asiatic regions took months; but the problem of forwarding them on to the fighting-line was simplified by the fact that the enemy was drawing steadily nearer.

Drummers stood at street-corners calling upon the passers-by to join the army. It had hitherto been a peculiarity of the Turkish administration that the inhabitants of the capital were not liable for military service. Now, however, plump citizens enrolled, and they were soon to be seen doing their first drills in detachments on the open streets: an entertaining spectacle, but invested with a spirit of determination which forbade

the spectators to laugh. Under previous Sultans recruits had been brought in by force, roped together like cattle. But now a new faith had arisen in the people, a fervent Mohammedan faith leading them to believe in a new Mohammedan future and above all in the defeat of the Russians. The poor voluntarily offered their mules. Foreigners, and especially Poles, also volunteered for service. On the other hand, the Turkish Christians (although they were subjects of the Sultan neither the term "native" nor "foreign" exactly described them) refused to take any part. The Greek patriarchs consoled the Sultan with speeches, and the Armenians openly declared that they would not fight the Russians or any other Christians. The refusal was a denial of all the accepted duties of a citizen, even in terms of the reforms proposed by the Western statesmen, whose object had been to ensure equal rights and obligations for all Turkish subjects. The Sultan was particularly displeased with the Armenians.

Payment to the Turkish army was far in arrears. The presses worked overtime to deliver bank-notes whose real worth was scarcely a twelfth of their face-value. The officers girt on their sabres with string, and the soldiers had no shoes; but each of the Anatolian peasant youths, the Kurdish herdsmen, the Arabs and the Circassians was worth half a dozen Europeans when it came to hand-to-hand fighting or when it was necessary to endure prolonged hardships. There was a shortage of doctors and medical equipment. An attempt was made to bring doctors from the West, but it proved difficult to come to terms with these gentlemen. They scornfully refused to accept decorative watch-chain seals on which their names were inscribed (many Turkish doctors, being unable to read and write, avoided embarrassment by the use of these engraved signatures); and they were even more indignant when, apart from these knick-knacks, they received no other reward for their services than a view of the shepherds grazing their flocks





upon the meadows beneath their windows. They asserted that they could do nothing for such a fee: whereupon the Turks replied that they had no use for them and sent dervishes to the front, whose frenzied songs delivered from foaming lips so inspired the troops that their courage and their capacity to bear suffering were enormously increased.

The world marvelled at Turkey's unexpected power of resistance. It was an age of reason. A comparison of the visible forces of the two contestants, in terms of men, material, arms, and supplies led to the logical conclusion that a prompt Russian victory was inevitable. But this belief in the supremacy of material factors ignored an element which played a great part in this war, as in other wars and in all human undertakings.

The Sultan of Turkey was master of more than an army of soldiers. An army of another kind fought for him, scattered over the whole vast empire: it was the army of religious agitators, the tens of thousands of Mohammedan students of theology, known as *sofias*. They were rendered bold by their complete freedom from material needs, which resembled that of the beggar-monks. Although they wore nothing but a rag upon their bodies their hearts glowed with faith in a future paradise, and their heads were stored with the ancient learning of the East, the wisdom of the Koran and a profound knowledge of the human soul. These *sofias*, soldiers without material weapons, penetrated into all the provinces, into cafés and bazaars, into remote mountain villages and the tents of herdsmen, spreading abroad true and fictitious stories of that first Mohammedan who, rejoicing in the hope of Paradise, had sacrificed his life. Magnetically they aroused in the people a new spirit of solidarity, of belief in their common Moslem destiny and of resistance to Europe.

Their Oriental senses were easily inflamed. The long years of privation which lay behind them made them susceptible to every influence. They were ready to see salvation in every

appeal, and in none more than the call uttered in the name of Mohammed. "*Allah, taala, Olim Olur*"—"God's power knows all things." What other answer was needed to doubt and despair, what other compensation for greater and lesser sufferings? They now believed that there had been a misunderstanding between their God and themselves, and that with prayer and pious living they would once again win the favour of the All-Merciful.

The new wave of Moslem fervour reached to India and China, to Africa and to the Sunda Islands. The Turkish victories over the Russians were the common talk of the day. And soon the project was being mooted throughout Asia of an uprising early in the coming year—against Russia or against England? No positive preparations for action were made, but hearts were stirred with a wild hope. "Now shall the power of Islam be made manifest!" became the cry of Asia. As though the Middle Ages had never passed away, it was said that the Sultan, girt with the Sword of the Prophet, would ride forth against the Christians. Abdul Hamid did not, in fact, leave his palace; but he spoke of Mohammedans in Russia who must be freed, precisely as the Czar had talked of freeing the Christians in Turkey, and he received the envoys of various Indian potentates. An emissary from the Emir of Kashgar remained for months in Constantinople, cordially received by the Sultan and suspiciously watched by the English ambassador.

Fugitives streaming from the Balkans into Constantinople, and onwards into Asia, afforded unexpected aid to the green-and-white turbaned religious agitators. At first they arrived in single families of well-to-do Moslems who did not choose to submit to the brutalities of a Russian occupation, but soon the number increased until the trains could no longer contain them. A mass emigration, estimated in some quarters at a million souls, thronged eastwards over the roads and tracks of the Balkans.

The Russians had proclaimed themselves the "liberators from the Turkish yoke", and for centuries Europe had urged Turkey to mend her ways. The Bulgarian atrocities had supplied a pretext for the war. But the terrible events which now took place in the Balkans exceeded all previous outrages. So brutal was the behaviour of the Russians towards the Moslem population, so violent the onslaught of the Christian Slavs now under Russian protection upon their Mohammedan neighbours, that whole villages were destroyed. In order to inspire pity the women placed themselves at the head of the fleeing hordes, followed by the children and old men, with the younger men bringing up the rear. But they met with little mercy. The legend of the River Maritza, which is said to have changed its course because its channel was blocked by the corpses of two thousand children, is but the expression of truths that went beyond the imagination of the story-tellers. The fact that many children were undoubtedly flung by their mothers into the river in order to save them from a more dreadful fate is but a small indication of the reality.

Soon there was no more room in Constantinople for the terrified and desperate and frozen humanity which arrived on the trains, clinging to the carriage-roofs and to the buffers, and bringing with them their surviving children and the tragic remains of their disrupted lives. The courtyards of the mosques were crowded with tents, and infants in arms wailed amid the bookshelves in the schools of theology. The rich offered their country seats, and the poorest were ready to share their crusts. But the flood of refugees continued to increase. Epidemics spread, and excitement fluctuated wildly between extreme terror and extreme hatred of the enemy. Multitudes were loaded almost forcibly on to ships, to be subsequently transported into the interior. And with them the tale of Russian and Bulgarian brutality, and of the measureless hatred of the

Christians for the Mohammedans, spread over the valleys and steppes of Turkey in Asia.

The Moslems had long prided themselves on their tolerance of other religions. Only in recent decades had their acceptance of religious differences diminished, not least because of the influence of Christian propagandists serving the cause of European imperialism, especially the Russians, the so-called "liberators". The tales of the Balkan refugees transformed with pictures of fire the half-formed thoughts of Asia. What mother, whether she was the wife of a townsman, a farmer or a cattle-herdsman, would not feel hatred and despair when she learned from other mothers how Christian soldiers had hacked Moslem children to death with their sabres? What woman would not remain to the end of her life a fanatical hater of men of whom she knew nothing except that they ripped open the wombs of pregnant women and betted among themselves whether the unborn child would turn out to be a girl or a boy? No calculated political accusation could equal in effect the stammered tales of ravished women and bereaved mothers. A sigh, a look or a helpless gesture voiced the condemnation of generations to come.

This newly aroused hatred of the Christian world, a hatred of Europe in the mass (the majority of the simple dwellers in Asia scarcely knew the names of the different European nations) was accompanied by a no less fervent exaltation of the man who stood as the symbol of Mohammedanism, the Sultan and Khalif. Scarcely a year after his accession to the throne Abdul Hamid found himself honoured in his empire as no Sultan had been for many generations. Unwanted and despised as he had been at the beginning, the reality of power had unexpectedly fallen into his hands. His bold acceptance of religion and tradition, of the whole concept of Asia, had kindled a flame of fanaticism. Would he be able to control it?

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

"It is damp in Dolmabagdshe," said the Sultan, and he moved from the white palace by the sea to the hillock of Yildiz.

He counted upon being able to turn the prevailing fervour to advantage (religious fanaticism was the greatest potential asset of a bankrupt Sultan), but he withdrew his own person beyond the reach of popular demonstrations in which this new hatred of the Christians might be abruptly transformed into fury against the ruler. The Turks had gone hungry for so long that it was necessary to guard against unexpected changes of mood. And so, while he continued to resist the Russian onslaught with ancient and inadequate weapons, he retired to a residence which was the most modern of fortresses designed to protect him against his own subjects.

The word "Yildiz" signified "starry heaven"; but the name bore little relation to the new residence. It was not a single building, but a cluster of apparently unrelated small houses, pavilions and walls, having no outward harmony and giving no impression of having been designed for a definite purpose. Standing upon a site inhospitable in itself, it was less like a royal palace than a camp, a temporary resting-place. The other royal palaces were all representative of an epoch: each portrayed a phase of human culture. But the Yildiz Kiosk, its scattered buildings connected by secret passages, was a portrait of its owner such as no artist could have bettered. It was an architectural witness of the singular character of the man.

A one-storied building stood close to the road at the edge of the hillock, guarding the entrance like a rampart. A series of adjoining rooms formed a long wall, with a similar building alongside it. These were the quarters of the Sultan's bodyguard. Albanians occupied one block and Arabs the other. In order to feel secure the Sultan had caused his guard to be formed of two groups of men who had for one

another the abiding hatred born of an ancient enmity, the irreconcilable conflict between mountain and desert. These would never combine against him; each group would watch the other, eager for its own advantage. Abdul Hamid put his faith in the evil in men's hearts. Placed between two parties which hated one another he experienced a happiness akin to that inspired by love.

Unlike the majority of the palaces built in the nineteenth century, which aped the rococo magnificence of Versailles, and unlike those strongholds of the Middle Ages whose four corner-towers were like fists raised to defy the four corners of the earth, the cluster of inter-connected small buildings of the Yildiz Kiosk was deliberately unpretentious. It was humble to the point of ugliness. Fear was its keynote—a measureless fear.

There was scarcely a limit to the boldness of Abdul Hamid's political designs. He was defying the Russians. He was planning to impose upon hundreds of millions of men a new ordering of their ancient religion. He was planning to transfer hundreds of thousands of Asiatics to his Balkan provinces (he actually settled forty thousand Circassians in Bulgaria) in order that Asiatic stock might permeate the whole empire. But where his own person, his feeble, unlovely body was concerned, he was the most terrified of men. The least physical discomfort, the least tremor of alarm, was sufficient to cause him to descend from the level of the statesman to that of a child not ashamed to cry its fears aloud for all the world to hear. It was as though something still lingered of the primitive terrors of his childhood, haunting his spirit and confusing his mind. Every addition to the buildings of Yildiz was an expression of hope and of renewed disappointment, because life still lacked that much-needed sense of security and assurance.

The interior of the residence reflected its modest outward aspect. It contained not a single apartment where large numbers of people might assemble for dancing or any other form of

gaiety. Its small rooms were huddled together, often narrowing into mere closets. There was no hall of mirrors, as at Versailles, where life might be multiplied and made radiant. The man who could live in such a place was plainly lacking in that exuberance which seeks to impress the visitor with a show of splendour. He wanted, on the contrary, to be able to keep every corner under his eye and to be troubled by no untoward sounds. A vast apartment might supply a flattering background, but it could not fail to produce an effect upon the spirits of those who dwelt in it, either unduly inflating them or else oppressing them with the weight of material objects. No artist or architect having the ability to raise buildings calculated to heighten the sense of human happiness and dignity had been summoned to Yildiz. It is true that the religion of Islam forbade the use of pictures: but even the furniture, kept to the bare, necessary minimum, was distributed carelessly between the cheerless walls.

In most of the rooms the furnishings were the same, affording little indication as to whether the room was intended for eating or sleeping. The inevitable divan was everywhere in evidence, a reminder of the nomadic period of the Turks, when temporary beds in the tents were made up of cushions and rugs. The rooms which characterized other royal palaces were lacking: the official bedroom with its magnificent canopy-bed, and the banqueting-hall with its immensely long rows of chairs. On the other hand, there was an extraordinary number of store-rooms. The Sultan liked to possess a large reserve of articles of daily use, as though he were occupying a besieged fortress which must maintain itself independently of the outside world. Supplies of furniture, clothes, arms, children's toys, costly and gimcrack porcelain from China and Prussia, and magnificent carpets, were piled up in great stacks. And certain rooms were set aside for stores all of a single pattern. They were filled with papers: mountains of files, chests filled

with dispatches and reports on events in the empire and in the capital, on the doings of European Governments and on the details of the daily lives of the Sultan's own officials. In the days of earlier rulers no State document had been allowed to stray into the palace; but now the Turkish emissaries abroad sent in cypher reports which were only understood by the Sultan and themselves.

These piles of documents were in effect a further addition to the ring of defences—the thick walls, the well-fed, highly paid soldiers, the most modern guns. Without leaving his residence—was it an Olympus or a prison?—Abdul Hamid wished to know everything that was going on, to be able to weigh everything, to be safeguarded against everything.

Although it was he who had proclaimed the Constitution which allowed the ruler only a limited sphere of action in relation to his responsible ministers, and although he had inaugurated the first Turkish Parliament, he set himself above both Constitution and ministers, and from day to day ruled more autocratically, becoming a dictator such as Turkey had not seen since the days of Suleiman the Great. He even went so far as to have a private telegraph-line laid between Yildiz and the army headquarters on the Russian front, over which he gave his personal orders. He insisted that resistance must be maintained, no matter how great the cost. Assailed by telegrams both from the Sultan and the Sublime Porte, the Turkish officers soon learned that it was the Sultan whom they had to obey. The invisible power emanating from Yildiz aroused in the army an almost superhuman spirit of sacrifice.

On December 10, 1877, a telegram reached Constantinople which appeared to be of purely romantic interest. "Made-moiselle Plevnice has become engaged to M. Kamaroff." It came from Paris and was addressed to a Greek banker; but an hour later the whole capital knew that Plevna, the last great

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Turkish fortress, had fallen. The way to Constantinople lay open to the Russians.

Hitherto the Sultan had been able to prevent bad news from becoming known in the capital. He had kept the people safely in ignorance behind a smoke-screen of thanksgiving services for Turkish victories, and had allowed himself to be greeted on his regular Friday visits to the Mosque as the "Gazi", the Victorious One. There was a real danger that the sudden news of this disaster, the sudden disillusionment, would bring about a catastrophic change of feeling in Constantinople, and perhaps an outburst of fury against the ruler and the new form of government.

But this did not happen. The people received the news with resignation. Kismet! Fate had willed it. They were accustomed to disaster; privation and disillusion had been their lot under many Sultans. Abdul Hamid had done one great thing for them during the short period of his reign: he had heightened their religious and racial consciousness. Their hatred of Christianity now protected him against hatred directed towards himself. The simple peasants and herdsmen who constituted the bulk of the nation were little given at any time to criticism; least of all did they now criticize the Shadow of God.

But he was confronted by the imminent and deadly peril of the advancing Russians. Was the moment now approaching which for four hundred years, ever since the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, had been so ardently desired by the Western world? Would Christianity set its Cross upon the Hagia Sophia? Would they burst into the royal Harem and make the Sultan himself a prisoner? Abdul Hamid sent a message to Queen Victoria asking her to intercede with Russia for an armistice and the beginning of peace negotiations.

Throughout the war he had awaited some action on the part of England: he had even hoped that she might take up arms against Russia. He had caused a careful translation to be

made of every utterance in the English Parliament which had any bearing upon the East. He had watched for a change of Government in England, a transference of power from Gladstone to Disraeli, from Derby to Salisbury, with an anxiety no less keen than that with which he had followed events at the front.

He passed much of his time in the garden at Yildiz. On a site commanding a view over the wide panorama of Constantinople he had caused a summer-house to be built and equipped with the most modern telescopes and telegraphic appliances. And it was from here, in the spring of 1878, that he at length saw what he had so yearned for. At San Stefano, seven miles from Constantinople, there was a broad strip of land now covered with Russian tents; and on the waters not far away from it a line of warships such as the ancient Bosphorus had never seen had taken up their station. When the Czar ignored Queen Victoria's request that he should abandon the campaign against Turkey, England sent to the Dardanelles a squadron of her newest and most powerful fighting ships. Officially it was announced that they were there "to protect the Christians in Constantinople against threatened Mohammedan attacks during a time of crisis," but in reality the British guns were trained on the Russians.

England could not allow Constantinople to fall into Russian hands, thus enabling Russia to block the route to India. The position now was that if Russia occupied Constantinople, Britain would occupy the straits. It seemed that such a state of affairs could end only in a European war. The Sultan watched the two giants as they confronted one another, neither venturing to make the next move. The two greatest Powers in the world were arrayed before the Turkish capital . . . and he could desire no better guardians. Their mutual hatred was his surest shield.

Finally the long-awaited pronouncement was made in the

English Upper House. England declared that the peace-terms to be imposed on Turkey by Russia must be examined by a council of Europe. The differences between Russia and England were to be settled, not in conflict but at the conference-table. A further unexpected development was that the conference was to be held in Berlin. The decisive battle of the war in which so many Russians and Turks had died was thus to be fought with words in a place remote from the Russian-Turkish frontier.

The Congress of Berlin was inspired by the loftiest sentiments. It met at a turning-point in human destinies to bring to an end a great and historic tragedy, and to purify once and for all the poisoned atmosphere of the Near East. But in reality it marked the opening stages of a still greater tragedy: it sowed the seeds of future events which were to reach their climax in the World War.

A great political drama was enacted at Berlin, with Bismarck, Germany's "Iron Chancellor", as its star performer. The leading role in this act of the unending pageant of the "Eastern Question" had been conferred upon him by Lord Beaconsfield, despite the fact that since the days of Palmerston the nursing of the "Sick Man of Europe" had been an exclusively British concern. This was the more remarkable since Bismarck had once said, "The whole of Turkey is not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier." Hitherto friendship with Russia had been the basis of Bismarck's policy: but fortified by the victories over Austria and France, and raised by her internal unity to the status of a Great Power, Germany was now less disposed to fear Russian hostility. For the first time she showed signs of interest in the East—a passion for which later she was to pay dearly.

Bismarck appeared before the Congress as an "honest broker", and in this role divided up whole countries. He con-

soled Austria for the loss of her position as the leading Power in Germany and Central Europe by giving her a small outpost in the Balkans with a protectorate over Bosnia and Herzegovina. Conforming to her ancient symbolical title of the Eastern Kingdom, Austria was now to turn her face eastward, withdrawing from the sphere of intense rivalry with Prussia and entering upon a new function as Germany's ally. But this appeasement of the appetite of one of the European giants did not suit the Russian colossus. Russia had emerged victorious after a costly war. She had occupied the whole of the Balkans, and her armies stood at the gates of Constantinople. But in the conference-hall her victory lost its brilliance. Fearing the European war which would have resulted if she had sought to push the conflict to its logical conclusion, she was forced to seek consolation in fantasy, that haven of the disillusioned. She began to nurse dreams of a descent upon India; and since she was denied the freedom of the southern seas beyond Constantinople she conjured up still greater objectives, embracing all Asia in her desires.

Thus the old conflict between Russia and England flared up again, and nothing could have been more propitious for Turkey.

In order to check at the outset any Russian thrust through Central Asia towards her Indian treasure-house, Britain, acting in concert with Germany, inserted in the Russo-Turkish Peace Treaty a certain Paragraph 167, whereby the Sultan undertook to introduce reforms in Armenia. The name Armenia had long been absent from the pages of history, but once rediscovered it was to be often and vigorously repeated. It was the Turkish province lying across the Russian route from the Black Sea to India, and it differed from the other Asiatic provinces of Turkey in that its population was predominantly Christian. The reform of Armenia and an improvement in the lot of the Armenian Christians was intended to deprive Russia of any

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

excuse for acting as a liberator and taking advantage of the pious pretext to reach out a hand towards India. It seemed that Europe had forgotten the many reforms promised and never carried out by Turkey in recent decades.

The lack of respect shown to the two Turkish representatives at the Congress of Berlin so touched a lady in Berlin society, more notable for her warmth of heart than for her political insight, that she urged them to conduct themselves with a greater assurance. In reply the Turks related the story of two hens who were asked by a cook whether they would prefer to be eaten with sweet or sour sauce. "That is roughly our position," they explained. "Either way we shall be eaten." However, one detail was overlooked, not only by the sympathetic lady but also by the shrewd diplomats taking part in the Congress: they paid no attention to the fact that neither of the Turkish representatives was a pure-blooded Turk. One was the German renegade, Mehmed Ali Pasha, and the other was the Greek, Kara Theodori Effendi. That the Sultan should have sent these two to Berlin was by no means fortuitous. He did not want a treaty embodying heavy losses of territory to be signed by Moslems. Nor was this simply a superstitious whim. It was a psychological detail very revealing of the character of Abdul Hamid, who loved to preserve the inconspicuous loophole, and who was above all things anxious to stand well in the eyes of one especial tribunal—that of the Moslem world. For this Sultan Europe was not the final arbiter.

But if the situation of the Turkish representatives at the Congress was so inglorious that they despised themselves, the respect shown to the Balkans was even less. The Great Powers laid them on the table and re-made them. New maps were drawn, and the approximate lines of political frontiers were added to the lines of mountains and rivers. The Congress kept its object steadily in view: to prevent the Balkans from coming wholly within the Russian sphere of influence, and,

on the other hand, to prevent them from becoming too independent. Thus a slice was carved off Bulgaria, whose independent status had just been recognized, and restored to Turkey, the loser of the war. And when Bismarck first heard of the "Kutzo-Wallachians," the name of a Slavonic Balkan people, he crossed out the uncouth words with so much fury that he broke his pencil.

Meanwhile—while the Congress reached its decisions and talked of humanity and progress—events were taking place in the Balkans, the object of all this benevolence, which surpassed all previous horrors and atrocities. Even before a final form had been given to the new decisions the scarcely formed Slavonic states rang with protest. No one was satisfied.

The Austrian regiments which marched into Bosnia as protectors against the Turkish despotism were the subject of bloody attacks by the populace. Families and whole tribes went in search of new homes when the valleys where they had lived came under a rule which did not please them; when Greek-speaking communities were asked to become Bulgarian, or when others who considered themselves Albanians were annexed to Montenegro. Moslem peasants wandered homeless through Bulgaria, driven away to provide better territories for the Christians; and Moslem craftsmen were used for forced labour. But it was not only the old religious differences which now gave rise to conflict. Countless new sources of friction arose, and the Christians themselves were divided by the enmity which sprang up between the Russians and the Bulgarians. The Russian military courts were busily employed in sending a stream of exiles to the Siberian mines.

It became apparent that the Balkans possessed characteristics very specially their own. This south-eastern corner of Europe, this bridge to Asia, was a world in itself, uncompleted and still fermenting. The process of racial migration had not quite ceased in its hidden valleys, and individual tribes and families

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

had not coalesced into the wider unities of nations. Their combative instincts were violently aroused by any tampering with the accepted order or with their primitive customs. Soon the wanderers were not only families in search of refuge. Robber bands swarmed everywhere who did not inquire after race or blood or faith, but took any loot that offered. In the inaccessible Rhodopus Mountains of central Bulgaria their defiance shaped these bands into a formidable power. Fifty thousand Moslem peasants (Pomaks) established an independent republic of which each citizen was at once peasant, nomad and bandit, united in rejecting the interference of foreign diplomats or any other distant authority.

Into this fragment of the remote past, where the type of man called "citizen" was still far from having evolved, there journeyed a Western commission resolved to heal all ills. Although the Balkans were only a few days distant from Western Europe, the officers, journalists and doctors from various countries who comprised the commission may well have felt that they were being transported into another millennium. Violent convulsions had preceded their coming. They traversed roads at the sides of which human skeletons and scalps with waving hair served as sign-posts. They found themselves among half-dead creatures in whom terror, disease and starvation had left only a feeble spark of life.

The commission went energetically and impartially to work. It devoted one day to the examination of widows. Monotonously the women repeated the story of how the Russians had forced their husbands to fight for them against the Turks, while bandits had plundered their homes. They could not name any one enemy, for the terror in the Balkans had appeared in many guises. Once aroused, the wandering herdsmen had fallen upon the established peasantry, and Christian and Mohammedan had flown at each other's throats. Russian and Turkish officers alike had caused hostile peasants

to be hanged. And since this time victory had fallen to the Russians it was the Moslems who had suffered most severely. No sooner had the Bulgarians felt themselves to be protected by the Russian army, and free from Turkish restraint, than they had proceeded to clear the ground for the future ordering of their civic affairs by hunting out like beasts the Mohammedans who lived among them. The male inhabitants of entire villages had been roped together and the fettered mass shot down and hacked to death. The women who survived did not thank the Western gentlemen who with amiable words offered them food and medicines: they begged for poison.

Days were also devoted to ravished children and to betrothed girls. These girls had lost every trace of youthful grace and freshness. Brutal ill-treatment had left the same impress upon them all, even upon their outward appearance. Each told how the Russians and the Bulgarian Christians (the latter people among whom they had grown up) had pressed heated vessels on their heads—"Bridal veils for the Moslem brides"—and had hung red-hot tripods about their necks as a bridal adornment.

The commission worked under conditions of the greatest hardship. They were often obliged to do without water for washing, so thoroughly had the sources been poisoned. But a long time passed before they would admit that their labours were hopeless, and that the chaos of suffering and brutality in the Balkans was too great to be remedied by any hasty first-aid action. Europe was profoundly shocked. It was the time of progress and liberalism, and the Western world did not understand the primitive instincts still prevailing in those regions. Such results as the commission achieved were summed up by Lord Salisbury, who said that since the days of the Goths, the Huns and the Vandals nothing had happened in the Christian world comparable to the atrocities attributed to the Russian armies.

The European condemnation of Russia, a Christian nation, implied a certain lessening in the condemnation of much-abused Turkey, which was no longer regarded as the only nation given to deeds of violence.

An echo of the uproar in the Balkans in the spring of 1878 reached Constantinople, which in general was an oasis of peace and well-being amid the sufferings of the Turkish Empire. Astonishing sales were held in the streets of the capital, which for thousands of years had been renowned for its markets and bazaars. The Circassians and Kurds, who had formed a part of the irregular troops and were now streaming back to Asia, were disposing of their loot. There were many treasures. The robbed peasant might find his own cow or mule among hundreds; and alongside these were smaller objects, pretty things which had never before known the smells of the market and the cattle-stall, since they had ranked among the sacred possessions of the churches. However, the golden and often jewelled chalices, crosses and monstrances seldom found purchasers. Armenians held it to be blasphemy even to look at these desecrated objects, and the Mohammedans saw in them nothing but bringers of ill-fortune. Animals, household goods and personal adornments were to be had at knock-down prices. The Circassians, with loaded pistols in their hands as a warning to too eager spectators, held noisy auctions. The markets were especially crowded when small girls were on sale, waifs snatched out of their buried Balkan valleys. But there were not many purchasers who could pay cash. The financial situation in Turkey was appalling. After a recent stabilization paper money had again fallen to a third of its nominal value. The price of bread had doubled, and those employed by the Government only occasionally received any salary: so much so that the tradesmen's lists of debtors afforded a complete roster of State officials. Even the street-salesmen had such lists.

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

The Sultan, remote in his residence upon the hill, caused every event in the town to be reported to him. He knew of the slave-markets of his Asiatics. He knew their pugnacity and their wildness. But he did nothing to tame them, only smiling when he heard the reports. He took especial interest in the megalomaniac speeches of the Russian general, Skobelieff, who felt himself to be already the conqueror of Britain in India, and frequently and noisily proclaimed the fact. With the conclusion of peace this Skobelieff, recently the victor in the war with Turkey, became a valuable pawn in the Sultan's political game. For Abdul Hamid, political adroitness lay in playing England and Russia against one another. The phrase, "the balance of power in Europe," which had become the main theme of European politics during the nineteenth century, had a reverse meaning in Turkey. Her object was to disturb the balance. In the unrest of others lay her best chance of peace.

It happened both shortly before the Congress of Berlin and subsequent to it that the British ambassador, Sir Henry Layard, was engaged by the Sultan in brief conversation. Presently Europe learned with astonishment that the Island of Cyprus had been ceded to Britain as a precautionary measure designed not only to secure British good will, but also to afford her a practical means of protecting Turkey against another attack. Thirty years had passed since in his novel, *Tancred*, Lord Beaconsfield had foreshadowed the acquisition of Cyprus by England. The wish had now been fulfilled. Without asking the views of the other European nations, England had demanded and obtained the island from Turkey, thereby gaining a valuable base on the route to India. And the Sultan had received further evidence of the disunity of Europe.

With a confidence inspired by his newly strengthened political position, Abdul Hamid tolerated the open sale of spirits in Constantinople, although they were forbidden by the Koran. He also forbade the destruction of the famous dogs of

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Constantinople, whose number was inordinately increasing: they were a good omen, a sign that Constantinople was still Turkish. And despite the disorders and unrest in the town he ventured out.

On the afternoon of May 19, 1878, he visited his troops on the plain of Masslak—not as a recently defeated ruler, but as a conqueror. He returned in a good humour, and remained unperturbed when that evening it was reported to him that further posters had appeared on the outer walls of the Residence bearing a message which ran: "Three hundred comrades can aid you or destroy you. Give up the usurped throne, of which you are unworthy, and restore it to Murad." Similar posters, from an unknown hand, had repeatedly appeared, and they had cost Abdul Hamid sleepless nights as well as large sums of money for the purpose of tracking down the perpetrators. But in the prevailing atmosphere the threat was not taken seriously.

At noon on the following day, however, three hundred men forced their way into the Palace of Tsheragan, where the deposed Sultan Murad was confined. Their leader, whose name was Ali Suavi, proposed to set Murad free and to depose Abdul Hamid. He had not decided, however, whether he should carry Murad off to the Rhodopus Mountains, there to make him the ruling prince in the "bandit republic", or whether he should take him to England. This Ali Suavi was a small-scale adventurer who had hitherto earned his living as a schoolmaster. His wife was highly ambitious. Perhaps it was this lady, whose many entanglements had won her a certain renown in Constantinople, who had persuaded him to transfer his discourses from the schoolroom to the courtyards of the mosques where fugitives from the Balkans were lodged, desperadoes ready to join with enthusiasm in any wild enterprise. His ill-considered tub-thumpings were surprisingly transformed into no less ill-considered deeds. The course of the adventure was appropriate to its origin. Murad, uncom-

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

prehending, thought himself the victim of an attack and tried to protect himself by force. His "saviours" pressed revolvers into his hands. Thus armed he fled to the remotest corner of the vast palace which was his prison. A quarter of an hour later eighty corpses littered the floor. Ali Suavi had paid dearly for his swashbuckling.

The palace officials vied with one another to be the first to bring the news to Abdul Hamid. No service to the nation, no victory of an enemy, was so richly rewarded by the Sultan as information relating to his personal safety.

The Sultan sent for his ministers, but refused to listen to a word relating to ordinary matters of State. The war was over, and the normal work of reconstruction should have been beginning; but the high officials were obliged to devote themselves exclusively to this conspiracy. An army of spies was sent out to pick up the threads and to run accomplices to earth. Abdul Hamid himself gave the orders, and the prices he paid for information rapidly rose.

He also recalled his brother-in-law, Damad Pasha, whom he had recently sent into exile. He had a high regard for Damad, a man of giant stature. As a rule he preferred men who were either exceptionally large or exceptionally small. Small men afforded him a sense of superiority, but a big and powerful man might be taken into favour if he were personally sympathetic. He liked to feel this tangible strength as something allied and close to himself.

Damad had already been banished and recalled several times. During the Russian war he had been a general. He had installed himself behind the front with a superb canopy bed and silken night attire, and had aroused so much comment by his extravagance that he was openly accused of being in the pay of the Russians. He continued to be extravagant, however. After the Suavi conspiracy he tripled the Sultan's bodyguard and conjured up an atmosphere of general rejoicing

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

in Yildiz. Every soldier received seventy pounds, and every officer three hundred simply for not having been one of the conspirators. The Sultan paid the rewards and the increased salaries with the utmost readiness; however miserly he might be in other matters, he had always money for bribery. His heart was filled with overflowing gratitude towards Damad, the magician who had inspired in him a new sense of security. It gave him pleasure to feel his brother-in-law's big, powerful body near to his own skinny and trembling person.

Upon two hundred and twenty survivors of Ali Suavi's followers a special attention was bestowed. Hitherto they had lodged with thousands of their fellows in the courtyard of one of the mosques, but now they were housed in special tents in the garden of Yildiz. It was another of Abdul Hamid's peculiar whims: he wished to have the conspirators in his immediate proximity. The danger of assassination, the possibility of a sudden attack, haunted his mind. Now that the fear had been realized and the danger had declared itself in a precise form he chose to look it in the face. He walked down the rows of tents, absorbed in the contemplation of the two hundred faces stamped with the fear of death. The connoisseur of fear relished their terror. But those mute countenances of peasants and labourers from the Balkans were only shadows hiding another face—that of Murad. Abdul Hamid had not set eyes upon his brother since he had made him a prisoner, two years previously, although Murad's palace, only a few minutes distant, was always in sight. At last he went to see him, and the two brothers confronted one another in silence.

They were so unlike that no one could have supposed them to be brothers—if, indeed, any such relationship existed between them. Outwardly tranquil, but profoundly perturbed Abdul Hamid contemplated the madness which shone from Murad's eyes, reducing his big, shapely body to a clumsy impotence. Heaven knows what intimations passed between

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

them, but the sight was one which he could not long endure. He ordered the sick man—now nothing but a prisoner and a dangerous rival—to be led away.

He then returned to the Harem. He wanted to be alone. But a door opened softly. A tiny sound was audible. Not knowing what it was he instinctively grasped a revolver. Each one of his coats had inconspicuous pockets designed to contain at least two revolvers. He fired, but the sound still continued. Then something fell to the floor and a child began to cry. A small daughter, one of his favourite children, had wanted to show him a new clockwork doll which could walk by itself. It was the hum of the mechanism and the patter of the tiny feet which had so terrified him.

Abdul Hamid's shot at a doll, which had nearly killed his own beloved child, was the last shot of the Russo-Turkish war. For two years he had been master of an apparently hopeless situation, stiffening the Turkish resistance by his own personal bearing so that the Western world had begun to have new faith in Turkey. But now that the war was over and peace had brought a slackening of the immediate tension his manhood suddenly weakened. Ali Suavi's conspiracy had strained his already taut nerves to breaking-point. A slight sound in his immediate neighbourhood, a moment of physical discomfort, and he ceased to be a statesman and a ruler: the Shadow of God became a frightened man trembling for his next heart-beat.

This panic, the sudden collapse at the last moment, was a warning sign. The Sultan's real life-work still lay before him. Three of his predecessors had failed on the same road. Would he be equal to the task of ruling Turkey? Would he be able to infuse new life into an empire that had been disintegrating for a hundred years?

The world's view of the future of Turkey was summed up by Lord Shaftesbury after the Russian war in a single sentence: "Turkey has been given a last chance to survive."

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE QUIET YEARS

TURKEY had become personified in a single man. Abdul Hamid possessed an absolute power unequalled by that of any other sovereign. The war with Russia had passed without bringing about the threatened destruction of the empire, and military defeat at the hands of a more powerful nation had resolved itself into a personal victory for the Sultan. Using the war as a pretext, he had dissolved Parliament for an indefinite period. His prestige as Khalif had grown enormously in the eyes of the Moslem world.

But it remained to be seen how he would set about the work of peace, with what helpers and what programme. Would he visit in person his many remote provinces—Anatolia, Armenia, Syria, Arabia, Turkestan and Mesopotamia? Would he himself study these separate and individual worlds and inspire them to new activities?

As ever, he was determined to be the absolute head of the Government. The high Turkish officials bore titles shaped by the centuries. There was the vizier, the "bearer of burdens", and there were the pashas, the "feet of the Shah". Ancient Oriental mythology represented them as physical attributes of the all-powerful ruler. Abdul Hamid also appointed viziers and pashas, but these were no more than marionettes. His real servants, who were in truth a part of himself, were his spies. As a boy he had spied for his mother in his father's Harem.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

To listen at closed doors, to watch, to peer into the secret hearts of others was for him a natural procedure, a means of self-preservation. And so when he came to power he procured for himself helpers who were the embodiment of his view of human untrustworthiness, the mischievousness, the venality of men.

Where other rulers had experts in the ordinary business of government to assist them, it was the experts in human weakness whom Abdul Hamid most valued. His spies pervaded the streets; they were in all the cafés, in all the Government offices. He sent them abroad. He even sent them on to the waters of the Bosphorus: concealed on the small craft moored before the villas of high officials they might overhear words of the highest significance unguardedly spoken in those idyllic surroundings. No matter what calling a man followed, whether he was an army officer, a high official or a small trader in the bazaar, it was never certain that he did not lead a double life, acting also—or primarily—as the Sultan's spy. It was a bad school of morals which Abdul Hamid founded in his empire, while at the same time he fostered projects of a remarkably practical kind. He declared: "I feel strong enough to rule my empire." And also: "The one quality which I demand of my subjects is loyalty."

Without travelling, and despite his scanty education, he knew the empire and the state of its affairs from the study of innumerable reports. He knew that his officials had insufficient authority over the districts surrounding the few towns in the sparsely inhabited land. Highwaymen made traffic unsafe, and robber bands shared with the local officialdom the proceeds from the looting of caravans. The peasants paid 30 per cent interest on money borrowed from the usurers, and petty officials handed over 60 per cent of their irregularly paid salaries to the same source, in order to obtain the immediate payment of a fifth. Wandering herdsmen, their cattle dead

after a hot summer, fell upon the cultivated fields, and the people of whole villages were transformed into nomads. Three-quarters of the land lay under the "dead hand" of the monasteries. Rivers and harbours were silted up; roads and bridges had crumbled away; woods and quarries went unused, and the handicrafts had so far fallen into desuetude that even silk-spinning, once the pride of Turkey, had sunk to a fraction of its former extent. And the starving people murmured, "*Allah kerim*"—"let fate take its course."

Not only were immensely rich natural resources left undeveloped, but the energies of the people of western Asia were also unused. Ten thousand sturdy young men in Constantinople lived by casual labour. Money-changers, scarcely to be distinguished from shoeblocks, stood at every street-corner: youthful pirates whose operations constantly aggravated the fluctuations of the currency. The disturbance of money-values was their business. And disturbance of another kind fed thousands of others, who called themselves firemen. No sooner had a fire broken out in one of the wooden houses than a swarm of these "firemen" appeared, obstructed the entrances and proceeded to haggle for the price of their services while the flames spread. These loafers in the capital were a symbol of all Turkey, a symbol of wanton disorder. So long, and so successfully, had the Turks been warriors that the virtues of the warrior had become the vices of the citizen. The strong enforced tribute from the weak, and men employed force not only upon each other but upon the earth, whose fruits they squandered and whose woods they ravished without thinking of the next harvest or of the morrow. Only the instant success, the fruit that could be plucked with an easy gesture, attracted the Turks, who saw in the gathering of booty their calling and their livelihood. The widespread social evil of bribery—*baksheesh*—also came under the head of loot. In Turkey the problem was to build up peace and order, not merely

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

after a single short war but after centuries of strife and decay.

The extent of the empire, which still exceeded that of Austria, Germany and France put together, was inversely paralleled by the narrowness of the world which the Sultan had built up around him—a prison of files. The walls of many of his apartments (they could hardly be called workrooms, since he generally passed the night as well as the day in them) were lined with chests and bookshelves containing documents, diaries and spies' reports, all carefully docketed. Always mistrustful, and seeing nothing with his own eyes, the Sultan liked to have accounts of the same matter from different sources; and if much in the vast empire went overlooked, other items were the subject of numerous accounts. Considerable vision and imaginative grasp were needed to form a comprehensive picture from the day-to-day reports on matters coming sometimes within the province of several different ministries, all of which the Sultan read and covered with marginal notes (the shrewd comments misspelt, the lines of the handwriting revealing both strength and lack of education).

He had inherited a state of bankruptcy. His first action was directed towards the solution of the problem of the national debt. He was convinced that only in one circumstance would the nations of Europe unite against him, namely if he owed them all money at the same time. The Turkish indebtedness to Europe had reached the gigantic figure of more than four milliard francs. Abdul Hamid was resolved to repay it. Every pound that he sent back to Europe contributed to the safety of his frontiers.

Old sources of revenue had dried up. War loot was no more than a wistful memory, and the greater part of the Balkan tribute had been lost when the Slavonic peoples became independent. The use of the printing-press had been discontinued. On the other hand, Turkey owed Russia a war indemnity of

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

300 million francs. Nothing remained for the repayment of these vast sums except the yield from the primitive economy of Asiatic Turkey.

The Sultan had refused to accept European political control, but he accepted a system of financial supervision by Europeans. In order to preserve his own political authority, he accorded to those versed in modern finance the right to superintend the development of Turkey's economic resources. A finance commission to deal with the "Ottoman Debt", comprised of the representatives of England, France, Holland, Germany, Russia and Italy, was made the authorized receiver of various important taxes—the stamp revenue, the duty on spirits, the levy on fisheries, and the national revenue from salt and tobacco. The Bulgarian tribute also passed at length into the hands of this international collector.

Abdul Hamid set a personal example of economy. He always wore the same unadorned black coat, and he made modest meals of milk, eggs and vegetables. The stuffed cucumber of the cottage table appeared daily on the royal menu. His drink was sherbet—insipid, slightly aromatic sugar-water. The lavish catering of the previous century, when a whole district of Constantinople had fed from the overflow of the royal kitchens and enormous quantities of food were given away or sold for absurdly low prices, was strictly forbidden. The Sultan refused indignantly to provide even tens of thousands of pounds for the circumcision-feasts of his sons or the betrothal-feasts of his daughters, although in previous reigns such festivals had swallowed up hundreds of thousands.

He was the first Oriental to understand the significance and the power of money in the modern world. His Oriental love of exaggeration and his fanatical tendency aroused in him a passion for money which sometimes took strange forms. There was, for instance, the curious present he gave his secretary, which appeared at first sight to be a Turkish fez.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

But it was a fez made of sealing-wax. It was a small monument to the saving disposition of God's Vicegerent, who had had the patience to scratch the wax off the letters which reached him, breaking his finger-nails in the process, and later blistering his finger-tips when he moulded the wax over a candle-flame, in order to bestow upon his subordinate a decorative but inexpensive reminder of the need for economy.

But certain of the Sultan's activities in spheres other than finance are deserving of record, since it is possible to discern in them signs of a considered policy of government.

Despite his own lack of learning he prized education. He caused schools to be built, instructional centres for fishery, forestry and the cultivation of silkworms, and even a school of medicine. The famous German specialist, von Duehring, was summoned to combat the epidemics which in peace-time caused the death of one Turkish soldier in four every year. A new water system was planned for Constantinople, a chamber of commerce was instituted, a cement factory and a large textile factory were built. A school was opened for the sons of Arabian sheiks and Kurdish tribal leaders. The wild Asiatic youths were to be weaned from the attitude of fear and aversion which they displayed towards the capital. Having been Turkish subjects for hundreds of years, they were at last to become citizens.

Although he himself undertook no journeys, the Sultan understood the significance of transport in the modern world, and he granted concessions for the building of several railways. The first railway connection between Turkey and Europe, begun many years previously and carried out by fits and starts, was finally completed in the year 1888. It was now possible to reach Constantinople directly from the west, without going round by the Mediterranean or the Black Sea. When in the late autumn of 1892 the first train on the Anatolian line reached Ankara from Constantinople, decked with flowers and flags, rejoicing filled the land. A thousand lambs were sacrificed to

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

the *karavapor*, the land ship. Fervent prayers rose to heaven amid the fumes of smoke and newly shed blood, and a thousand voices invoked long life for the *Padishah* who had broken the barriers of centuries and opened up the markets of the world to Asia Minor. A million and a half inhabitants had been given a new lease of life, and seventy thousand square kilometres of fruitful earth, hitherto lost to commerce, were presented to the world.

It must be admitted that long intervals elapsed between one Turkish achievement and the next. The building of schools and railways took time. Moreover, the Sultan was in no hurry. He believed that the reform of Turkey should take place only slowly, by very gradual steps, in conformity with the Turkish proverb: "Haste is of the devil."

Suggestions for new reforms arrived constantly from Europe ("If one innovation is possible," said the Europeans, "then why not several?—why not every innovation?"). They proposed that a *gendarmerie* with European officers should be founded for the purpose of maintaining order, that the legal system should be freed from political influences and that a new system of taxation should be introduced. But Turkish officialdom had an especial gift for accepting suggestions in principle and subsequently discarding them. There was an old Eastern saying, "Promises are paper to wrap sweets in."

Abdul Hamid might not be expert in any prescribed field of knowledge, but he had no lack of knowledge of human nature. In practical affairs he took careful note of the character and temperament of the persons concerned. The numberless reports reaching Yildiz told him how stubbornly the Oriental spirit clung to tradition. New forests of mulberries were now growing in his realm, but every branch of every tree was weighted with the struggle that had preceded its growth. It was not easy to persuade Turkish peasants to plant more than they needed for their immediate use. They pointed to their

beards, grown prematurely grey beneath the hot sun, and they cried: "Let our sons do the planting—we shall not live to see the trees!" The first attempt of a large Swiss-managed silk factory in Amasia to kill the cocoons with steam produced a roar of Mohammedan protest. Had not God ordained that the cocoons should be killed by the hot Turkish sun, even if it did so more slowly and more cruelly? A merchant regularly sent coffee to Yemen, one of the chief coffee-growing regions, and wondered why business was always so bad. An army commander proposed to send his troops by the shortest land route to the island of Crete. At the end of the nineteenth century Turks in high office often knew as little of the geography and structure of their native land as the discoverers of an unexplored world.

Nor did the difference between East and West reside wholly in this ignorance of practical matters. The East lived a rhythm of its own, opposing to the steady tempo of the machine age its alternations of sudden fervour and lethargy. "Time is money" had become the slogan in the offices of Europe: but in the offices of Turkey men still sat as they had done for hundreds of years, their legs drawn up beneath them on divans, gently fingering strings of beads. While the modern West cried, "Let us *do!*!" The East thought not of Doing but of Being. Existence itself was the first thing in life. "*Jawash, jawash*"—"slowly, slowly," and the Turks ran the beads of polished amber one by one through their fingers, as though it were a spiritual exercise in gradualness.

Abdul Hamid was energetic by nature: he enjoyed work: but he respected this Oriental habit of slowness. He remained silent after hearing many proposals, and no one dared return to a project, whether it was for the irrigation of barren lands, the development of mines, or the building of roads and railways, which the master by his silence had rejected. His memory was extraordinary: he forgot nothing that seemed to him

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

important. But he believed that gradualness was as important in Turkey as action itself. If he had demanded of his subjects the speed and industry of the machine age, if he had dealt too severely with every theft of goods or every sale of office, he might have provoked an open rebellion, endangering the scarcely begun work of reconstruction, and threatening complete chaos.

The fate of Egypt was to him a warning of the evils of speed, which he saw as a force allied to Europe and dangerous to Turkey. The land of the Nile was only nominally still a Turkish province. Since 1867 the Governor of Egypt had been known as the Khedive, and had borne himself as an independent potentate. The far-reaching reforms introduced by Khedive Ismael had caused Egypt to incur enormous debts, and the construction of the Suez Canal (a project of the Pharaohs!) had led to catastrophe within six years of its formal inauguration in 1869. The Khedive had been obliged to sell the shares to England; and finally, in 1879, he had been forced to yield up his own authority, abandoning Egypt wholly to the charge of England and France. This share transaction caused Abdul Hamid to think with bitterness of Disraeli, whom once he had preferred as a Conservative to his Liberal opponent, Gladstone. The bargain—England had paid £100,000 for shares with a par value of £200,000—was worth more to the West than a victorious war against the East. The Sultan had no objection to the reform of Egypt, and he had been impressed by the building of the canal, but he abhorred the speed with which the reforms had been carried out. He regarded this speed as a surrender to the West which would mean the ruin of the East.

When the British ambassador, Lord Dufferin, approached him in the summer of 1882 to propose joint action against the Egyptian rebels and against the chief, Arabi, who was inciting the Arab sheiks to resist authority and threatening a "holy

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

war", Abdul Hamid hesitated in his customary fashion to come to a decision. He condemned the attitude of the Egyptians, who were still nominally his vassals, but he sent no troops against them. He would not ally himself with the English against the Arabs, nor openly with the Arabs against the English; and he trusted to his conviction that an English Conservative Government would not go to war in Egypt without his consent.

But on September 15, 1882, the ambassador returned vigorously to the charge. The Sultan thought highly of Lord Dufferin (the more so since he was Irish, and therefore possibly not a wholly devoted servant of England), but none the less he kept him waiting. From his plush armchair Lord Dufferin watched the lovely autumn day decline, the sun sink down over the Bosphorus, the stars shine radiantly in the eastern sky. His hints that he was still waiting were met with flattering and soothing words, and he was further consoled with perfumed cigarettes and black coffee in miniature golden cups. A quarter of an hour after the stroke of one a tall, thin figure in flowing silk appeared, moving silently in the direction of the Sultan's apartments. This was the renowned Court Astrologer, Abdul Huda. After a further half-hour the Grand Vizier, Said Pasha, emerged with a secretary and announced that the Sultan was unable to reach a decision: it would be necessary to hold further conferences. Lord Dufferin therefore returned to his villa, and here he found a telegram awaiting him. It informed him of Sir Garnet Wolseley's decisive victory at Tel-el-Kebir that same morning. Egypt now belonged to England!

England described the occupation as "provisional", but Abdul Hamid was well aware that he had suffered a permanent loss, one, moreover, which was more severe than the defeat by Russia in the Balkans. A loss in the West was not comparable in his eyes with a loss in the East. He did not regret the discovery by England of a secret correspondence between

himself and the rebellious Arab sheiks, and especially with the Sheik Ali Rageb. It served, rather, to save his honour in the eyes of the Arabs and of the Moslem world. They would see where his sympathies had lain, and they would understand that it was caution and foresight which had prevented him from entering openly into conflict with England—as yet! The loss of Egypt caused his dislike of the West, and especially of England, to become a hatred scarcely to be concealed. It fortified his growing belief in the separate and individual laws which must govern the life of the East.

The passion of love has marred the destinies of many of the great figures of history but Abdul Hamid's destiny was marred by the reverse of love. It was hatred, his talent for hating, his readiness to hate, which led him astray, diverting his eyes from his objectives and clouding his understanding.

He hated individual men, and he hated above all things the whole conception of the West—Christianity—Europe. No less bitterly did he hate the nameless assassins by whom he felt himself to be constantly menaced. He never ceased to be on his guard against these sinister figures, which in one form or another had haunted him since his childhood. It was only necessary for one of the many spies' reports which daily reached Yildiz to contain a hint (generally unfounded) of an attempt at assassination, and the Sultan would lose all interest in matters of State. He devoted hours of anxious thought to the investigation of a warning against water-pipes, and thereafter insisted that all the water-pipes in Yildiz—hundreds of yards of them—should be disinterred in his presence and replaced by others only a few inches below ground-level, so that any attempt to use them for the purposes of assassination might be instantly detected. His terror of assassins caused him to lose all grip of reality and probability.

Over all the pages of Turkish re-birth a question hung like

the sword of Damocles, affording a rich theme for the dramatist: would good or evil triumph in Abdul Hamid, statesmanship or cowardice? His intelligence and political adroitness qualified him for great achievements, but the weak nerves of the despot burdened with his dark memories of a youth passed in the Cage of Princes were a constant source of peril. The whole future of the Ottoman Empire, to which the world had accorded a "last chance," was bound up with the character of a single man who by tradition and his own belief had the stature of a god. But small things, brief intervals—a year, a day, an instant—may prove decisive in the life of a man; and since all men are torn by conflicting impulses how much more unstable was Abdul Hamid, in whom so many conflicts held sway?

Two years after the decree for the settlement of the foreign debts (it was known as the Moharrem Decree, after the month in which it was signed) the strange dweller in Yildiz, having accomplished this sane and far-sighted act, furnished the world with a spectacle which revealed the other side of his nature. He caused his one-time Minister of Justice, Midhat Pasha, who had been exiled for some years and later appointed to the governorship of Syria, to be tried for conniving at the death of Sultan Aziz (now many years buried, and regarded as having committed suicide) and when Midhat had been condemned to death he commuted the sentence, sent him to Arabia and there had him strangled!

This occurred in July 1883. In August a messenger from Taif, in Arabia, brought to Constantinople a package labelled "Japanese Ivory—an *objet d'art* for his Majesty." Abdul Hamid opened it with his own hands, and the severed head was revealed of the man whom in life he had regarded as his most deadly enemy. . . . Could any wide gulf separate this measureless hatred and craving for self-preservation from complete unreason? Could there be any real escape from the darkness in which his spirit wandered?

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

The episode over, the Sultan returned once more to his sober daily life amid the sackfuls of dispatches. It was reported that the death of Midhat appeared to have had a tranquillizing effect upon him, and that he pursued his official duties with especial energy. It was also a bad time for spies. For a time it seemed that the evil side of Abdul Hamid's nature had been somehow assuaged by this horrible death of an innocent and gifted man, and that because of Midhat's atonement the tribulations of his childhood no longer cast their shadow across his path.

But the mask of godhead continued to wear thin. The matter was the subject of reports by foreign representatives. Sir Henry Layard recounts how the Sultan, after two hours' intelligent conversation, began suddenly to talk of "a typhoon last night," of "a conspiracy in a cheap café" which he had certainly never seen, but which he described with a most imaginative accuracy, and of how "the café and the bridge upon which it stood vanished in the flood," concluding with a sigh—"fortunately!" He had evidently enjoyed describing this destruction—another escape from assassination. The Austrian ambassador also noted the sudden change which came over him at the sound of a cannon-shot during an audience. Every child in Constantinople knew that the shot was nothing but a fire-alarm, but Abdul Hamid, who had previously been talking cheerfully, became gloomy and was visibly perturbed. When a later Austrian ambassador, Count Dubsky, presented himself for his first audience, no doubt secretly a little dismayed by the reports he had heard of the great despot, he found himself face to face with a man who looked at him beseechingly with big, dark eyes and asked in a conspiratorial voice "if he would be frank with him. . . ." Abdul Hamid sought constantly for friendship, if not deliberately then because of the hysterical fears that tormented him. He astounded a young French officer, a quite unimportant young man who appeared from time to time at Yildiz with messages from the French Embassy, by

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

imploring him not to leave the country, not to desert him, not to leave him alone with his afflictions.

The atmosphere with which he surrounded himself at Yildiz became more and more remote from reality. The more fantastic the reports sent in by his spies, the more worth did he attach to them and the more he paid. Soothsayers, astrologers and wax-modellers all had their place in his entourage. If a wax-modeller failed on any occasion to make a model of Murad from a single cast Abdul Hamid regarded the day as one of ill-omen and refused to take any decisions. Clinging to the ancient Eastern belief that a representation of a man weakened his life-force, he caused endless models to be made of Murad—his prisoner, but a dangerous rival so long as he drew breath. A whole series of exorcisms and curses, which he had learned as a child, were a part of his daily speech.

The most satisfactory channel of communication with the shadow-world, the link with invisible perils, was the youth named Abdul Huda. He was a beggar from Aleppo who had heard of the Sultan's superstitious fears. On an impulse he came to Constantinople, approached the Residence and begged for an audience. He announced that he was of the "enlightened", and no claim could have served better to open the Sultan's doors. Only after an audience lasting two hours did Abdul Hamid dismiss this new "friend", who thereafter became a permanent inhabitant of the Residence, occupying a house of his own with wonderful silken hangings. The preposterous creature was given administrative authority: he set the official seal upon sentences of exile and death. In the course of their *tête-à-tête* he had revealed to Abdul Hamid that Mohammed had appeared to him and had informed him that henceforth he would always appear to him when any danger threatened the Sultan. Abdul Hamid was ready to offer half his kingdom for such a service. Since Abdul Huda was content with less he was treated as a benefactor.





### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Religious law prescribed that the Sultan-Khalif should on every Friday, the Mohammedan Sunday, attend religious service in the mosque. During the first years of his reign Abdul Hamid obeyed the prescription. Each of these excursions was a sore trial to him. Never for an instant, while he drove through the cheering crowds, did he cease to fear a sudden shot, a bomb exploding beneath his horses' hoofs, or the sudden maniacal figure of an assassin appearing with uplifted knife on the step of his carriage. His feelings were the same when he drove through Constantinople on feast-days. His route was never disclosed in advance, and should there be any talk of a particular route he was certain at the last moment to go by sea. In the end he avoided the discomfort of these outings by limiting them to two in the year, on the occasion of the two great festivals when it was his duty to kiss the robe of the Prophet, the most precious of all the many treasures contained in the Seraglio of the old palace. And without affronting tradition, which he never ceased to honour, he so arranged matters that he could perform his weekly devotions within sight of the Residence: a new mosque, the Hamidie Mosque, was built about a hundred yards from the outer walls.

Even this brief journey required, however, that for a short time he should be without the protection of defensive walls and hiding-places. The more thickly, therefore, did his guards surround the short stretch of earth to be traversed by the Shadow of God. In their skirt-like loose breeches of white material laced with leather thongs they stood as though rooted to the earth about the square of the mosque, opposing an impenetrable barrier to the spectators who began to collect hours before the ceremony, and who were obliged to supply numerous details concerning themselves before being allowed to approach so near. A special place was reserved for the Diplomatic Corps. The expression of the uniformed troops and of the secret agents was enough in itself to persuade the

beholders of their insignificance in the presence of the being who was shortly to pass by.

The spectacle attending the Sultan's visit was so brilliant as to convey an impression of unearthly splendour. From above, as though from heaven itself, a voice was raised superbly in song. A priest from the minaret was uttering the call to prayer, and the response was the profound silence of the assembled believers. Not for minutes after the last echo had died away might voices be raised upon earth. Then a clamour of drums and horns broke out, their thunder so bemusing the senses of the spectators as almost to prevent them from perceiving that gates had opened in the palace walls and a procession of carriages was coming down the hillside. Awe descended upon the crowd. The closed carriages concealed the creatures of a fairy-tale, women from the imperial Harem, their beauty honoured by the gold brocade which clothed their escort from head to foot. Once again several minutes of profound silence ensued, while the tension grew before this enactment of a centuries-old ceremonial. A mighty fanfare sounded, and two glittering officers, with drawn swords, solo performers on a splendid, empty stage, appeared in the foreground and approached the steps of the mosque. A movement ran through the glittering wall of guards. The troops were presenting arms.

Reverently the gaze of the spectators was transferred from the mosque over the hundred yards of roadway to the secret walls of the Residence. Silhouetted in the gateway appeared a simple carriage in which was seated the simply-clad figure of a man. Abdul Hamid always wore the same grey army cloak. His unadorned, dark-green carriage, befitting the Sultan in this age of economies, appeared surrounded by the extravagance of ancient Oriental religious ceremony. A horde of lackeys, chamberlains and officers, all decked with gold, all equally abased in the presence of the master, strove to steady the gait of the Arab stallions. The agitated cohort of magnifi-

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

cently clad men sweating in the dust of the imperial carriage was a wordless portrayal of the subjection of the many to the one—let those who still were not persuaded remain for ever unbelievers!

Abdul Hamid gazed about him with hasty, anxious eyes, seeing murder everywhere. He sat well back in the carriage, his hand in a white glove rising constantly in a salute that was never quite completed, as though the effort exhausted him. His left arm encircled a boy leaning against his knee, one of his younger sons. He knew the Turkish character: ninety-nine would-be assassins in a hundred would abandon the attempt when they found themselves confronted by a child.

His aspect was one of extreme weariness as he entered the mosque, thrusting the little boy in front of him. Attendants sprang to his side, moving rapidly but with caution lest a too hasty gesture should disturb their lord. Then he vanished to hold intimate converse with the God before whom he was nothing but a shadow.

A profound silence reigned outside the mosque during the whole period of his visit. The guards had stiffened once more into a wall. Nothing moved behind the dark curtains of the carriages in which the women were seated. They were not allowed to leave the carriages: the Sultan wished only to know that they were near him.

The climax followed. His devotions accomplished, the Sultan reappeared, entered another, smaller carriage, himself took the reins and drove back to the residence at a rousing gallop. It was a spectacle to take the beholders' breath away: the sudden, almost miraculous transformation from weakness to strength, from rigid humility to bold activity. The small man with his abnormally small hands gripping reins and whip and urging his powerful beasts up the hill, as though he had become a being inhabiting a different world.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

A few moments later the doors of Yildiz had closed. The carriages, the ornate lackeys, the pomp and splendour of Godhead-upon-earth, all had vanished. Without these trappings the mosque was nothing but an unpretentious, small building; the soldiers marching away were callow youths.

For six more days the Sultan withdrew wholly from the outside world. Friday was a day of exception for him, but it was not wholly a day of rejoicing. It was a day of inner anxieties. He was devout and wished to approach his God, and he loved his people in the mass; but he feared the individual strange faces.

On these days his normal intense industry was relaxed. Fear for his personal safety excluded all other concerns. In the evenings after the weekly outings he was accustomed to receive Izzet, his foster-brother. Izzet, a man of no education, was the keeper of the imperial wardrobe. No one could have been more suitable for the office, for he greatly resembled Abdul Hamid in appearance. The royal garments were fitted on him, so that no tailor need touch the Sultan's person. Before Abdul Hamid wore a new coat, Izzet warmed it with his own body. A strange and almost tender intimacy existed between the two men, wardrobe-keeper and Sultan. They seldom spoke to one another. Abdul Hamid spoke little in any case: he preferred to listen. And when Izzet did open his mouth it was not to talk but to read. After the exhausting journey to the mosque he crept in to occupy his unassuming place. His insignificant body was entirely hidden by a screen standing beside Abdul Hamid's divan. Directly the Sultan had lain down the lights were lowered and Izzet's voice was heard. The echoes of deeds of violence, of brutal murders and hideous executions filled the room. Occasionally the voice paused. Was the Sultan asleep? It was a strange cradle-song which soothed him into slumber. He called for constant repetitions of stories of the French Revolution—of the implacable people's courts—of the

guillotine. How often did he accompany Louis XVI on his journey to the scaffold! But did he picture himself always as the King, or did he sometimes change sides and accompany Robespierre and Marat? He was by turns torturer and tortured. The pictures faded into one another—to suffer and to cause suffering, to know inexpressible terrors and to provoke them. . . . Izzet controlled his voice, ready at any moment to let it die away to a whisper lost in the deeper breathing of the slumberer. But sometimes he had to read all through the night. The stories of the French Revolution were followed by the tale of St. Bartholomew's Eve or that of the child-murders of Bethlehem. And when the great events of history were not desired there were lesser histories, memoirs, or detective stories, as unaspiring as they were gruesome. A new work by Conan Doyle or Xavier de Montepin was promptly taken in hand by the Sultan's translators (a large staff of these was kept constantly busy) and rendered into Turkish in a few days, evidently with little regard for style. A favourite character during those nights haunted by the terror of dangers escaped and to come was the Archduke Rudolph of Habsburg, the story of his tragic love for Maria Vetsera and of their suicide.

Tales of the calamities which had befallen other men, of their extreme sufferings, had a soothing effect upon the Sultan, perhaps overshadowing or compensating for his own constant fear of calamity.

At times Izzet was obliged to change his tone, making his voice sharp and commanding, and especially when he repeated the words of the great Sultan Suleiman, who in the sixteenth century had inspired all Europe with terror. Abdul Hamid could escape from his sorry inheritance into the remote and splendid past while he listened with uplifted heart to the words which his ancestor had addressed to Europe. "There is a certain Charles who calls himself 'Emperor.' Does he not know that *I* am Emperor, and that there is only one Emperor upon earth,

just as there is only one God, whose name is Allah? And see how God has stricken him with madness! He calls himself the 'King of Jerusalem!' Does he not know that *I* am the King of Jerusalem, and of all this Empire, and of every land that comes within my gaze? I have seen you, and you have heard me. I have this to say. If you desire peace you shall have peace, not for twenty years but for two hundred years: for the Sultan is the friend of his friends and the enemy of his enemies."

Sometimes Abdul Hamid fell asleep as such passages were read to him, taking the exaltation with him into his dreams.

But however the night had been, whether inspired by sinister or heartening voices, whether blessed by sleep or lust or empty of both, the next morning found him at his work-table, surrounded by the piles of documents and dispatches, engaged once again upon the endless labours attending Turkey's rebirth.

The years passed, and the world grew accustomed to the punctual payment of the Turkish debts. Schools and railways came into existence, but slowly, after the Turkish fashion. The Sultan had long since begun to dye his beard, and a large store of bottles and jars was kept in his bathroom. His toilet was a lengthy business, especially before the Friday excursions. A bevy of women attended to him while he rested after his traditional milk bath. They darkened the hair of his beard and over his temples, gradually extending their operations over more and more of his head, and using a mixture compounded of coffee, gall-nuts and henna, according to the recipe of a certain sheik. Abdul Hamid studied his face in the mirror with the greatest attention while this was going on: with his generally half-closed eyes now opened wide he noted every grey hair and every wrinkle, and gave precise instructions for his cheeks to be rouged and his pale forehead lightly tinged

with brown. When he went out he wished to appear young and healthy, indestructible—eternal.

His weekly visit to the mosque afforded the outside world its only opportunity to set eyes upon him. His remoteness enhanced the aureole of divinity. The gods of the ancient East had always worked unseen. Pious Turks were grateful for the condescension which permitted them a distant glimpse of the Khalif's face, and they did not presume to judge him. When he had first come to the throne it had been the universal belief that his reign would be a short one; but within a few years he had become invested with the glamour of immortality. To the humble people of the Moslem world he had become simply "the Sultan," as though there had been no other before him, and as though, like God Himself, he would reign for ever.

And as though he expected to live for ever he constantly added to his Residence, reconstructing it, changing doors and windows and often building false façades to mislead undesirable visitors. There was an old Oriental proverb, "Who piles up stones will live long." Close by the Harem, the offices, the store-rooms and the barracks which comprised his private dwelling, factories were built—a tobacco factory, a textile mill, a porcelain factory and a well-equipped cabinet-maker's workshop. Building was an accepted part of the daily life of Yildiz. It went on slowly and quietly as everything did, as though on tip-toe. And as the seasons in this mild corner of the earth merged imperceptibly one into the other, so did the years go smoothly by. Exotic evergreen shrubs grew in the park, and were so carefully tended that a "plant hospital" was erected for them. Animals from all over the world, which the Sultan collected in his vast menagerie, were a constant source of distraction (their number so increased that the cost of feeding them rose to £10,000 a year). The cabinet-maker's shop enabled him to indulge in a favourite hobby: working skilfully and accurately he turned out one window-lattice after another.

There were other pastimes. There was his collection of arms and precious stones. There was target-shooting (Abdul Hamid was an expert shot, and his targets generally took the form of human figures). There was a small motor-boat which he navigated on the lake in the palace grounds; and there were small cafés in which the prisoner of Yildiz could achieve the illusion of freedom, when he sat down, the only guest, to drink a tiny cup of black coffee served with the most scrupulous ceremony.

But these distractions did not divert him from the tasks of government. Year by year the same events repeated themselves. Things moved slowly not only in Turkey but in the sphere of foreign affairs. He watched intently the eternal disunity of Europe, and especially the breach which had arisen between England and France after the British occupation of Egypt. The Czar, the liberator of the Balkan Slavs, had met with one setback after another in the Balkans after his victorious war against Turkey. Bulgaria turned away from Russia towards the West, and in 1885 war broke out between this country and Serbia. From the watch-tower of his residence the Sultan watched the decline of the newly installed Serbian and Bulgarian rulers—Obrenovitch supplanted by Karageorgevitch in Belgrade, Alexander of Battenberg replaced by Ferdinand of Coburg in Sofia. Ten different ministries succeeded one another in Bulgaria in the five years from 1879 to 1884. Every sign of unrest in the Balkans, since they had dared to separate themselves from Turkey, was pleasing to the Sultan: he wished them nothing but mutual destruction. Or would the Balkans be swallowed up by the Western Powers, now that they had been wrested from Turkey? The map of "Greater Serbia," drawn in red ink and patriotic fervour by Belgrade professors, caused him especial satisfaction. He would not be sorry to see Austria visited by the trouble which threatened to come out of the Balkans. Moreover, in his view, which was exceed-

ingly acute where his personal affairs were not concerned, this trouble was imminent. He constantly expressed his amazement at the blindness of Austria and Russia, who had supported the Balkan Slavs in their drive for freedom in order to score an immediate success over Turkey, without reckoning the danger that this spirit of freedom might one day be directed against themselves. (In fact, the first apostles of freedom in the Balkans, Stambuloff and Venizelos, were the forerunners of the international apostles of freedom, the Lenins and Trotskys.)

From the kiosk in his garden where he had installed the most modern of telescopes, Abdul Hamid watched everything that went on in the neighbourhood of Yildiz. Who shall say if he was moved by the magical beauty of his surroundings, or the blue warmth of the Mediterranean climate? He gazed with interest in the direction of Therapia, where the foreign diplomats had their dwellings. But his eyes did not care to dwell upon the lovely building of Tsheragan, where Murad remained the prisoner of his brother's will and of his own madness. On clear days the view extended as far as San Stefano, where the Russian regiments had been encamped in the year 1878, and where a mausoleum had been erected in memory of the Russian dead. The Sultan knew every corner of the pious edifice. His spies were not idle. Living quarters for soldiers and magazines for Russian arms were concealed behind the sarcophagi. The "dead" of the mausoleum, which was in reality a Russian barracks at the very gates of the Turkish capital, had been known on certain evenings to exchange signals with the Russian Embassy by means of the helioscope and with lanterns. With a few small bombs the Russians could cut the railway to Europe. Nevertheless, the Sultan honourably allowed the mausoleum to remain. In certain circumstances he might even find the breaking of the railway-connection with Europe desirable. He did not attach too much importance to

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

connections with the West. His task was to remind the world anew of the significance of the East and the might of Asia.

He believed in his own immortality. Although his body was sickly, and the slightest discomfort was enough to take away his appetite, and although quite early in life he walked with a stick, he paid no heed to the passing of the years. What man is fully conscious of his own impermanence? The approach of age is brought home to most men by facts which cannot be ignored. Their children grow up, their wives grow old, their friends die. But the world which surrounded Abdul Hamid, the world of women, did not grow old. The companions of his youth became mothers, but others took their place. The young followed the ageing, and those still younger awaited the master's glance. They stood at the foot of his bed, ready to make him young again with the offer of their own budding youth.

All the Turkish Sultans had prided themselves upon their harems, which must contain as many and as beautiful women as could be found, the companions of their hours of pleasure and the mothers of future monarchs. But the harem of Abdul Hamid was very different from those of his predecessors.

The institution of the harem had come into existence in a world of warriors. Men whose business it was to make war had sought to free themselves from the incubus of jealousy, in order that they might be as manly and warlike as possible. Their daily lives, their calling, their ambitions and their rivalries, took place in the outside world, in contact with the earth, the wind and the blood of their enemies. In the house of women the warrior was a guest. After the perils of war he desired nothing so much as unquestioned, unthreatened possession in his own home. And to repair the ravages of war he needed many women, many mothers of future warriors. Thus when the Turks ceased to be warriors and conquerors the harem lost its original significance. Nevertheless, they clung

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

to the custom of having many women. Indeed, during the period of decadence the custom was exaggerated, and the harem, becoming the constant refuge of the men, became also their destroyer.

Hundreds of women lived in Abdul Hamid's Harem, as in those of his predecessors. They were bought when they were children. On the day of a certain annual festival every province and every district sent an *Ikbal* (a maid of good fortune) as a present to the Sultan. But Abdul Hamid's women were more to him than mistresses and the mothers of Sultans. The Harem was his real world. Only among his women did he find those human relationships which in normal life bind a man to his fellows. They gave him love and friendship, distraction, motherly care and a pious devotion. He had greatly loved his mother, and no other person had taken her place. When he became Sultan he had contrived for himself an artificial world on the hillock at Yildiz, guarded by the finest regiments and rendered diverse by its countless secret pavilions, its passage-ways and hidden corners. And at the centre of this world were the women, a protective wall of living creatures, an atmosphere of feminine minds and bodies—as it were, a single, vast mother's lap.

In the early mornings, when the Sultan began his work, he had a woman at his side. Even the initiated referred to her as the "great unknown." None of the men from the outer world—officials, servants, spies, architects, gardeners or animal-keepers—who appeared before him could say whether the thick veil concealed the same woman every day or whether it was every day a different one. The "unknown" was simply a voice. She opened the sacks containing the carefully folded and disinfected documents, and when they had been dealt with her hand applied the rubber stamp with the initial "M." The letter signified the word *Mudjebinge*—"Thy Will be done." A religious formula was thus daily currency in the work-

room of the Shadow of God. A woman was frequently present at the audiences with foreign diplomats. On these occasions, however, the veil was not enough. She was hidden behind a screen, but occasionally her voice made itself heard.

A Turkish Sultan could never marry in the ordinary sense of the word. A wife equal in status to himself would diminish the lustre of his supreme power, for he was not the possessor of certain things but the possessor of everything. But Abdul Hamid was not the voluptuary in love that most of his predecessors had been: he was an affectionate husband and father. He demanded of his wives not only beauty but also virtue and character. The ideal of the mother, paragon of purity and gentleness, was ever-present in his imagination. Against this image each of his women must fall short of perfection. It was the exact opposite of what was generally conceived to be most desirable in a woman of the harem. The memory of his own mother (and the never-resolved doubt concerning his legitimacy) caused him to be particularly strict with his women. Whenever he selected a woman for his bed the date was carefully recorded, in order that a check might be kept upon her possibly ensuing motherhood.

Love affairs in themselves had no great emotional significance for him, but an important part was played in his life by the women he had loved. In general he mistrusted women less than men, and he was especially inclined to trust a woman who had shared his bed. The fact of physical possession seemed to afford him an added security, as though their shared ecstasies had brought the woman within the compass of his will, had made her a part of himself. He caused his one-time mistresses to be educated; they learned to read and write, and to speak foreign languages. The presence of strangers often caused him discomfort, and since he was bound to receive foreign envoys he safeguarded his composure by the presence of one of these women behind a screen. He entrusted to a woman the duty of

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

shining the light of a candle under the divan on which he was to spend the night. It was the highest possible distinction, far above that accorded to the guards at the palace gates or at the doors. As space narrowed about the person of his Majesty, so did it become more precious.

On days when he was especially unquiet, when he was haunted by fears of the outside world and of assassins, he had his meals served by women, eating actually from the hollowed hand of a woman instead of with fork or spoon. China or silver might be poisoned: the warmth of the woman's—the mother's—hand calmed his fears. The all-powerful Lord of Turkey, upon whose will the fate of a vast empire and thirty-five million souls depended, lapsed into the posture of a helpless child.

When as Khalif and the Shadow of God he appeared in the Harem on feast days and was ceremoniously announced by the Mistress of Ceremonies, the women kissed the hem of his garment. But a slight movement of his hand, a brief glance, only intelligible in this world, was sufficient to put an end to ceremony. They let themselves be wooed by the man. They knew when they might approach close to him and when they must withdraw. They were a warm tumult of feminine thought and feeling, constantly encircling him, diversifying his existence with their own diversity.

Time stood still in the imperial Harem. Nothing changed with the years. Nothing had changed in nearly two centuries.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### ARMENIA

**I**N October 1894 red flags appeared in the village of Mavangk, in Armenia. They were the portents of a gathering storm, a reminder of the fact that time did not stand still everywhere in Turkey. Although Armenia had been a Turkish province since the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Armenians had remained true to the Christian faith, and they had preserved their sense of unity with the Christian peoples despite the distance and the Moslem barrier which separated them from Europe.

The mountainous nature of the country had enabled them to retain their natural characteristics in the face of powerful neighbours—Russia to the north, Persia and India to the south and south-east. The deep valleys were closed to all outside influences except one, which evoked an instinctive and traditional response. The Armenians had been among the first races to embrace Christianity. They had done so even earlier than Rome, in the days of the Apostles, when it had been a doctrine of pure humanity, justice and brotherhood. And it was to the prophets of justice and brotherhood that they again opened their hearts. This time the call came from the West, and it was known as Socialism.

Since the Congress of Berlin they had felt themselves newly bound to the Christian European world. Paragraph 161 of the Treaty of Berlin had laid down that, "The Sultan undertakes

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

to introduce special reforms in Armenia." Eighteen years had passed since the signing of the treaty, and the reforms had still not been introduced; but a new generation of Armenians had grown up with hopes that grew more feverish with the dragging years.

Young Armenians made pilgrimages to the West, to America as well as to Europe, visiting the universities and the industrial towns. They gave renewed evidence of their traditional intelligence, and returned home after brief absences materially and spiritually enriched. Young teachers and doctors of philosophy and letters spoke to the people of Church councils and were listened to as though their words were holy writ. Into the huts of the peasantry, who worked as ever in their fields throughout the week and went piously to church on Sundays, crept echoes of the new social doctrines, murmurs of the rights of man, hints of the enslavement of the poor by the rich. But it was not against the rich of their own country, the merchants and tax-collectors, that the Armenians turned; they laid the responsibility for their troubles at the door of the highest rulers of Turkey and of the Sultan himself. Explosive words were succeeded by arms and explosive substances. There were villages where sacks of gunpowder were hidden in every hut.

The Sultan's spies heard what was said in the Armenian pulpits and saw what was hoarded away in their dwellings. They sent in their reports—and were ordered by the Sultan to incite the Armenians to further unrest! Abdul Hamid, who as a rule favoured policies of gradualness, circumspection and compromise, went to the opposite extreme in matters concerning Armenia. The intelligence and shrewd sense of statesmanship which so constantly urged him to caution were overwhelmed by a primitive hatred whenever the name of that country was spoken. His whole life was overshadowed by the suspicion of his illegitimate descent from an Armenian father.

It had threatened to destroy him immediately after his birth, and it had hastened his mother's death. With every act of ruthless brutality towards the Armenians he sought to show that he was not one of them. It was the only evidence he could offer; for although innumerable chroniclers had recorded the great deeds of the Turkish Sultans, only rumour and surmise remained to tell of what had happened to his mother in the Harem of Sultan Mejid. Whether his hatred of the Armenians was in reality born of a sense of persecuted innocence, or whether it was the hatred of a renegade, will never be known. But the fact remains that in about the twentieth year of his reign, when he was becoming known as the "Prince of Peace", a tempest shattered the apparent calm and slow development of the Turkish Empire. The Armenians rose against him with a fury which went far beyond the necessities of their situation or the demand for reform; and he responded with a fury no less divorced from reason. Two elemental forces had been unloosed against one another.

His secret agents had much work to do in Armenia. Mixing with the Christian population they stirred up rebellion among those who had not yet been infected by their neighbours. They told untrue stories of the luxury in the royal palace, and compared it mockingly with the poverty which prevailed in Armenia as in all the Turkish provinces. They spread rumours that long-forgotten measures of intolerable discrimination between Christian and Moslem were to be revived. Christians would be required to wear yellow collars and to install wooden demons at the doors of their houses. The days of tolerance were over! . . . And in the next street or village the same agents had other stories and rumours for circulation among the Moslems. The Moslems, indeed, were their proper public. Having for the greater part the right to call themselves priests, and wearing the turban as the emblem of piety, they entered the mosques as preachers and aroused the worshippers to a





state of extreme agitation by warning them of their approaching doom. The Christians were planning to drive them out of Armenia, to steal their property, to violate the mosques, to make themselves sole masters of this corner of the earth which by eternal law belonged to the viceroy of Mohammed! . . . These modern tellers of Eastern fairy-tales understood perfectly how to adapt their fables to a scientific age. They told of balloons in which the Western Powers would send armies to support the Armenians against the Turks. They said that an English prince was already on his way to become the ruler of Armenia. They said that the crafty unbelievers had invented a magic mirror with which they could light fires from afar.

The Moslems were overtaken by panic. At the very mention of the word "dynamite" they hastily cried "Mohammed," in order to drive the demon away. The sight of a single Armenian in Western attire (and especially wearing a Western hat) sufficed to conjure up for them the vision of an invading army. A pamphlet was circulated bearing the title, "The Vision of a Sheik watching over the Grave of the Prophet in Medina." It contained amongst other matters the following, written in both Turkish and Arabic: "As I sat yesterday upon my couch enlightening my soul with the perusal of the Koran, the Prophet of God, Mohammed, appeared to me in a dazzling light, and spoke as follows: 'Oh, Sheik Achmed, God sees that His people have fallen into shame and forgetfulness, and He has ordered me to destroy them that their place may be taken by others mindful of their duties.' I begged him for mercy and forgiveness, and he answered: 'So be it, Sheik Achmed! But let all those flee who do not pray, all those who wear the garments of the Giaours, all those who use the devices of the Unbelievers, for the Judgment is at hand.' "

The agitators counselled the Moslems not to await the onslaught of the Christians, but to anticipate it. The tension in most parts of Armenia became so great that a word or a

careless gesture in the bazaars or the cafés was enough to let loose murder. There was no lack of explosive material. Dynamite might be something new, but the feud between the peasantry and the wandering herdsmen, who in bad times filched what they wanted—corn or cattle or women—was as old as their own hills. These conflicts between peasant and nomad had always occurred in primitive lands, but they had been primitive combats, breaking out sporadically and ending without catastrophe. The quarrel between Kurdish Moslem herdsmen and Armenian Christian peasants had another significance.

It was not long before the agitators were able to report successes to Yildiz. The Moslems were quick to grasp that the favour of the master in Constantinople was on their side, and that he permitted them, even ordered them, to attack the "unbelievers." Special days were ear-marked for assaults. More often than not the Moslem headman of the village persuaded the Christians to give up their arms by promising them his personal protection. The disarmed people were then attacked in their houses, and none above the age of twelve years—none, that is to say, having the power to bring new Christians into the world—was permitted to survive. The first sight of blood robbed the people of the last of their reason. No longer contenting themselves with plunder, they set houses on fire and even burnt in the market-place the loot which at first they had been so careful to preserve. The outbreak of disorder in a village, whether the first victim was Christian or Mohammedan, was a signal to the neighbouring Kurdish herdsmen on their spirited horses. The Kurds understood robbery and murder. It was not only their business but their pleasure. They fought the better with rags of women's clothing fluttering from their lance-tips—the clothing of Christian women and girls whom they had raped before the eyes of their fathers and husbands (the heathens, the sons of Satan, the hereditary

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

enemies!) and then compelled to dance naked in the market-place about the burning pyres of their wrecked houses.

¶ How utterly repugnant to all who called themselves men were the forms which death took in this conflict between two warring heavens! Acting upon the orders of their god, men ceased to hear the voice of conscience; they ceased to be men: treating their fellow men like animals, they debased themselves to the level of the beasts. The dervishes filled the air with their fanatic howlings—"Plunder, kill and burn until your hearts are sated. God rejoices in the blood of unbelievers. The smoke of their burning houses is as pleasant to Him as smoke upon an altar. Even the old man shall not be spared, for his faith is as hard and dry as his bones." Orgies of hatred took place in the churches. Those walls that had echoed the solemn chants and mellowed words of religion must look down upon hellish inquisitions. Glowing metal pots were thrust by the Moslems upon the heads of the Christians—"bishops' mitres," they were called, and "crowns of thorns." The Cross was branded upon Christian bodies, and they were asked, "Why does not Christ help you?" The throats of young men were cut as though they were sacrificial beasts, to the accompaniment of sacred chants. Rivulets of blood flowed over the thresholds.

The estimate of the total number of Armenians killed during the years 1894-96 varied from a hundred thousand to half a million. Compared with such a massacre the murder of children in Bethlehem seems almost trifling. In certain places the smell of burnt human flesh hung in the clear mountain air for days. The attempts of Christian missionaries to bring the slaughter to an end resulted only in the saving of a few people in their immediate neighbourhood. The Sultan remained deaf to all appeals and all reproaches.

Abdul Hamid reckoned that where Armenia was concerned no European intervention need be feared. Armenia was delivered by her geographical situation wholly into his hands.

England certainly had theoretical possession of Cyprus; but Cyprus was a very long way from both England and Armenia, and to transport troops from the island would be an excessively costly operation. The only immediately neighbouring State was Russia, but in the two decades since the Russo-Turkish war her designs on Turkey had diminished in intensity. The Czar had enough to do to keep his own revolutionaries in order. Thus although the most emphatic protests reached Constantinople from the Governments of Europe, no other action was taken. Europe loudly expressed its disgust at the massacres; but for two full years the conflict went on, not only in Armenia but in every part of Turkey where Armenians lived.

It may truthfully be said that no Turk possessed of any education, or who at a distance from the scene had retained a little self-control, approved of the Armenian massacres, although none dared openly to oppose them. All the power was in one despotic hand, purporting to be the hand of heaven itself and actuated by the fathomless hatred of one misguided individual. And on August 26, 1896, this savage duel between Abdul Hamid and Armenia reached a climax.

On that day a group of Armenians—Russian Armenians as well as Turkish—occupied the premises of the Ottoman Bank in Constantinople, and flung bombs into the streets. This unheard-of act of violence in the peaceful Turkish capital was directed not only against the Sultan but against Europe, and less against the European diplomats who had done so little to protect the Armenians than against the European capitalists. The Armenians who carried their rebellion to Constantinople itself, making the Ottoman Bank their first objective, were a part of the social movement that had in the first place inspired Armenia to revolt against the Sultan. That the premises of the most important bank in the land should have been annexed to serve as the revolutionary headquarters was a situation to

cause the capitalists to turn pale, and more especially the European capitalists, who were important shareholders.

Europe was now moved to play an active part in the Sultan's conflict with Armenia. The European embassies arranged that the group of men who had taken possession of the bank should be granted free conduct to a European ship. Were they then shielding the disturbers of the peace from the punishment which, by European standards, they deserved? They did not, at all events, venture upon any further attempt to solve the Armenian problem. Europe, at that time free from the threat of social revolution, had no desire to be involved with social revolution elsewhere. Abdul Hamid was therefore free to pursue his hatred of the Armenians.

He allowed that particular group of men to go, at the same time making it clear that to rob and murder Armenians was the duty of good Mohammedans. There were plenty of idlers, newly released prisoners and impoverished Turks available to carry out the pious ordinance, which was nothing less than a brilliantly organized campaign of destruction. The splintering of window-panes in the Armenian quarters sounded as though an earthquake had overtaken the town. No property belonging to Armenians remained intact, and, of course, no Armenian. Because of the physical resemblance between Armenians, Jews and Greeks, the houses of the Armenians were marked with a cross. The myrmidons of the Sultan, wreaking havoc and despair for three days in the appointed districts of the town, were thus able to distinguish their victims. Abdul Hamid had sowed death with a wave of his hand.

He went so far as to determine what weapons should be used. He disliked firearms: any loud noise was a shock to his nerves. He caused his army of ruffians to be armed with clubs weighted with iron, and for three days the harbour quarter around the bazaar resounded with the hum of the lathes as the turners worked to meet the demand. For three days the thudding

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

of the clubs never ceased, until a deathly stillness settled upon the Armenian streets. Such Armenians as managed to escape from that iron-bound hatred took refuge with Europeans or with the more humane Mohammedans—or else in the unchanging sea which softly lapped the shores of Constantinople. Life flourished upon Oriental soil in the heat of mid-summer, and its superabundance lapsed quietly and without tragedy into death. The blue shores around the harbour were loaded with decaying fruit, with the remains of giant pumpkins and grapes, with the bodies of cats and dogs tumbled silently by death out of a reasonless existence into the blue waters. And now they were visited by strange companions on their picturesque bier. The Armenians had come to join them.

The Armenian tragedy had many aspects. It was a social revolution, an orgy of despotism, a religious war. The nineteenth century, which had opened so assuredly as an epoch of freedom and enlightenment, drew doubtfully to its close. Plainly it was necessary to be prepared for surprises. Despotism had triumphed in Turkey: but was not a twilight of the gods at hand?

In England the voice of judgment was raised. Gladstone, the most bitter antagonist of Abdul Hamid, had only recently retired from office, and close to him stood the Duke of Argyll as the accuser of the “Rule of Evil” in Turkey. England, who for an entire century had defended Turkish independence, declared that she could no longer undertake this responsibility. Abhorrence of Turkey and of the Sultan was voiced at meetings, in public speeches and in pamphlets.

Had Turkey’s “last chance” been squandered? Had Abdul Hamid by the Armenian massacres—the triumph of his own dark impulses over the good in him—passed a death sentence upon his empire and himself? His achievements during the long years of peace as a diplomat and an administrator, the schools

ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

and railways he had built, the repayment of debts, were obliterated in the memory of the world. After nearly twenty years of peaceful rule he had become, at the turn of the century, an object of universal loathing; and Turkey must share this burden of execration, since it was the instrument of his despotic will.

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE NEW CRUSADER

**O**N a warm Sunday in October 1898 a group of men stood before the Palace of Dolmabagdshe, on the shores of the Bosphorus. Among them, his slight figure enveloped in a cloak of sombre black, was no less a personage than the master of the palace himself. As a rule Abdul Hamid did not leave his residence except on the two highest feast-days of the year, but this day, October 18th, was a most exceptional occasion. It was not in the name of the Prophet that he had made the real sacrifice of venturing outside his protecting walls, but for the sake of a visitor, the German Emperor, Wilhelm II.

The fez which he wore was surprisingly large, and was said to be lined with steel. But it was no visible burden which had caused Abdul Hamid's back to become bowed while he was still in the prime of life. Fear and lust of life, vaulting ambitions for the regeneration of Turkey, vast and wild political projects, and together with these the gnawing, humiliating, constant terror for his personal safety, had laid their weight upon him, bending his back, rounding the shoulders from which his abnormally long arms depended, inclining forward the heavy head with its great hooked nose. It was fortunate that the rules of Oriental hospitality did not call for the constant smiles which were customary in the West. The Oriental host must above all things preserve his dignity, and for no man was

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

dignity so important as for the Shadow of God. It may be questioned whether Abdul Hamid knew how to smile. (Members of his inner circle have stated that he was known to do so when he caressed his children.) Every moment spent away from the elaborate protections and the numerous bodyguard at Yildiz was a moment of terror. With every breath he drew he trembled for the next.

For weeks Constantinople had been preparing to receive her distinguished visitor. The worst streets had been hurriedly repaired, and certain of the worst patches in the poorer districts had been surreptitiously set on fire and destroyed, almost making it appear that the Almighty had intervened to honour this meeting between two potentates each of whom considered himself to be His personal representative. An intimate contact with one of the most important of European personages was in prospect, but Turkey preserved her ancient customs. During the process of preparing the capital in honour of the visit certain houses were cut in two, but the resulting gaps were only casually hidden with wooden hoardings, as though the town were no more than a camp of nomads. Scarcely an article of furniture remained in its accustomed place in the homes of the more wealthy pashas. When the wish was expressed at the palace that the Kaiser might be received with all possible magnificence, pashas and high officials had appeared with their finest silver, their most splendid carpets. Each brought his best to lend to the Sultan. Turkish hands were ever ready to give, Turkish eyes rejoiced in display, and every good Mohammedan felt himself personally exalted by the magnificence of his ruler. Amid the houses and kiosks of Yildiz a new palace had almost imperceptibly come into being, designed for the Emperor and Empress. Silversmiths from the town of Brussa, famous for centuries for its silver-work, had made a bed for their Christian Majesties which was a masterpiece of decorative relief-work. Gifts, the presentation

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

of which would begin each day's activities, were assembled in great quantities—carpets, embroidery, inlaid weapons and pieces of furniture. The Empress Augusta was to receive as an especial distinction a miniature of herself framed in precious stones. The dishes for the forthcoming banquets were also the subject of careful study, and a chef who wrote the words "bombe glacée" on a menu was instantly dismissed. The word "bomb" was one of a dozen which in Abdul Hamid's empire were condemned as high treason. The Sultan's sensibility in such matters grew from year to year.

The landscape of the Bosphorus, the green hilly coast stretching along the blue arm of the sea, lay relaxed in autumn ripeness, its natural charm unspoiled by the scattered works of man. The city tumult which for so many centuries had echoed over the streets of Constantinople was far removed from this enchanted bay. But suddenly the silence was broken by cannon-shots, and a flight of long-necked cormorants rose screeching into the air. The Sultan was pale. The arrival of a white yacht heralded the moment which for weeks had been the focal point of European politics. Wilhelm II and Abdul Hamid, the representatives of two worlds, stood face to face.

Abdul Hamid's small right hand was extended to Wilhelm, who grasped it with a noticeable warmth. The act was symbolical. European disgust at the Armenian massacres had not yet died down, and voices were still heard which condemned the Sultan as an assassin. Now one of the greatest of the Christian monarchs had come to visit him as a friend.

Nor was this all. Wilhelm's moustache, that arrogant symbol of conquest, was pressed in brotherly affection against Abdul Hamid's flaccid cheek and coal-black beard. For him it was a moment of horror. A Christian had touched him! A man's flesh had approached his own!

The exceptional relationship between the two men is dramatically depicted in this action. No other man had ventured

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

to touch the Sultan's cheek. Abdul Hamid took extraordinary precautions to keep people at a distance. Only a few specially chosen women of all the hundreds in his Harem were permitted the distinction of approaching the end of his bed. Physical contact with him had a very special significance, for it afforded the best means of overcoming his constant mistrust. A friendly touch or a caress affected him far more than the longest speech. He never forgot the kiss on the cheek which he received from the English ambassador, Mr. Canning, when he was an eight-year-old boy; so great an impression did the direct expression of sympathy make upon him that he had the greatest difficulty in adapting himself to the change in English policy towards Turkey which culminated in the occupation of Egypt. His general coldness towards foreign diplomats was notorious. Many tales were told of the discomforts they suffered at audiences, which were, moreover, constantly postponed. Even when the visitor did succeed in reaching the royal presence he could never be sure that his words were listened to. Nevertheless, whoever desired to gain influence in Turkey must first gain influence with Abdul Hamid. The German Emperor had undertaken a strange and delicate task. His problem was not so much to reconcile the material interests of two nations as to find a way into that perverse and lonely heart.

Broadly speaking, this encounter between Germany and Turkey was governed by the fact that each had urgent need of the other. It was not merely that an enfeebled Turkey had need of Germany. Germany, newly arrived at the status of a Great Power, was undergoing an industrial revolution. Since the Franco-Prussian War her population had risen from 38,000,000 to 56,000,000. Her consumption of grain far exceeded what her soil could produce, and her textile industry was obliged to import nine-tenths of its raw materials. On the other hand, her production of machinery, arms and finished textiles far exceeded her consumption. Finally, completing the

cycle of the rising German economy, was the superfluity of men and women, for whom, as for the excess of manufactured goods, outlets must be found in order that her new-found unity and strength might continue harmoniously to develop. England and France, coming earlier into the field, had been enabled by their colonial possessions to effect far-reaching social changes for the benefit of their own peoples, workers and bourgeoisie alike. The real "exploited," the helots of the nineteenth century, were the native colonial peoples. All classes of European society were at one in their sense of superiority to the coloured races; but Germany had had no share in the benefits from which this feeling derived.

The Emperor planned to satisfy the vast and varied needs of his empire with the help of Turkey. But although the name of Turkey was used, it was intended to designate not the nation but the territory which it occupied. Asia Minor, the seat of the mightiest empires of ancient history, had for centuries been moribund. After the fall of the Roman Empire streams of emigrants from Central Asia had poured into Europe. But while the movement of peoples in the West had soon come to an end, resolving itself into the formation of relatively stable national units, in the East new states had constantly been set up, only to be overrun by fresh hordes of horsemen before their culture had had time to take root. Persians and Turks, Tartars and Mongols, formed separate waves of the flood-tide of humanity which from A.D. 500 to A.D. 1500 poured over Asia Minor, robbing the land of workers for the tilling of fields, the building of roads and harbours and the other labours of peace. Turkey, the heir to the ancient splendours of the Near East, was in fact the inheritor of no more than a splendid appearance when in the fifteenth century she became the uncontested mistress of Western Asia; but instead of devoting herself to the development of her already immense empire she had gone further along the road of conquest.

Her position had grown steadily worse. The discovery of America and its growing participation in the economy of the Western world had lessened the importance of Asia Minor as a channel of world trade. The caravans which from times immemorial had passed through the valleys of Armenia, Persia and Anatolia on the route from India to Constantinople became fewer as ships began to cross the Atlantic. And after the unsuccessful siege of Vienna by the Turks in 1683 Western Asia lost its remaining title to respect in the eyes of the world; it ceased to be a breeding-ground of conquerors. Not until the end of the eighteenth century was there a renewed interest in the eastern route to India. Napoleon, among many far-sighted acts, succeeded by his Egyptian campaign in reviving Europe's enthusiasm for the East, and with the construction of the Suez Canal in 1869 the old mariner's dream of a shorter route to India was fulfilled. At the same time it marked a new stirring of life in the Orient, and with it an increasing rivalry among the Western Powers for influence in the Near East and Asia Minor with a view to the possible partition of Turkey.

When European statesmen spoke of Turkish reform the expression of their views was seldom unaccompanied by a hint of blame or reprimand, command or threat, or at the best a condescending benevolence. The German Emperor, however, informed the Austrian ambassador in Constantinople that he had no intention of interfering in Turkey's internal affairs. And whereas the other European Governments dealt with Turkey through formal diplomatic channels, he set out to solve the "Eastern question" by direct personal contact. He appeared, moreover, not only as a friend but as the apostle of a doctrine of salvation whereby Turkey was to become the saviour of the world. Recalling the past splendours of Western Asia he declared himself ready to co-operate with the Sultan in building for it a no less splendid future. The phrases, couched in modern terms, which urged the rediscovery of Asia in the

cause of European colonial development, had a rich, impressive sound.

"The Paradise of the Bible is a part of Mesopotamia"—that is to say, of Turkish territory. "It is written in the Old Testament that from the gateway of Paradise, from Eden itself, flows the river which waters the garden, dividing itself into four parts. . . ." The Tigris and the Euphrates were now Turkish rivers. "In the days of Abraham, Babylon was renowned as the centre of the world. . . ." Not only the Bible but such authorities as Strabo, Herodotus and Xenophon were put to the use of the new Near Eastern propaganda, and their message served to kindle the more calculating minds as well as the dreamers. There were, moreover, documents of a factual nature for those who put no faith in poets. Certain tax-lists had survived, and the modern world was impressed to learn that so recently as the eighth century the region of Asia Minor had paid taxes with an estimated present value of £11,750,000. The figures had a magical ring in Turkey itself. Of the six million inhabitants of Mesopotamia who in the eighth century had lived well enough to pay such large sums, only one and a half million needy descendants remained. Life flowed sluggishly in Western Asia, growing weaker with every generation. Over-use of the soil through innumerable generations had brought the peasants to the verge of starvation in the province of Babylon, where in the sixth century the earth had yielded ten million tons of grain a year. Famous market towns, Nineveh and Babylon among them, had shrunk to villages. Men, beasts and crops all were lacking in the Old World.

Western Asia was not, like Africa, an unknown field of exploitation. Its past afforded the measure of its potentialities. The German Emperor wished to improve upon the past. He wished to cover vast districts with a network of canals, and by means of artificial irrigation to refertilize the impoverished

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

earth. He wished to build railways which would convert the nomads into a settled peasantry while at the same time giving them an unprecedented mobility. In shining helmet and red military cloak, the picture of a victorious war lord, he rode upon a white steed through the streets of Constantinople. Even in Yildiz itself he maintained the same conquering air, as though he did not hear the steps of the spies upon each of the carefully tended garden paths, the clank of arms behind every bush, all the furtive manifestations of that hidden army of guards which kept at bay the terrors haunting the Residence. He felt himself to be on the verge of success before his work was even begun. Pictures of the wealth and splendour of ancient Babylon and Assyria overshadowed in his mind the reports of the present poverty and backwardness of Turkey. He imagined a new and robust race of men growing up upon the soil of the Biblical paradise, producing a superabundance of those natural products which, exchanged for Germany's excess of manufactured goods, would herald an unparalleled growth of riches and power. Men who are given to fantasy can seldom measure with clear eyes the gulf which lies between reality and their dreams. Obstacles appeared trifles to this man who was not only a dreamer but also the Emperor of Germany. It was with the bold vision of a world-conqueror that Wilhelm conceived his project for a revival of the Near East, which he and Abdul Hamid were to undertake together.

"Will you not dismiss the interpreter, Sire? I know you speak French."

The Emperor had uttered many words of far-reaching political significance, but seldom any more important than these two sentences, with which he brought Abdul Hamid nearer to him than any other foreigner ever succeeded in doing. Within a short time of his arrival the Sultan's *entourage*, breathlessly watching every development, were speaking of

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Abdul Hamid's friendship for him. This sudden warming to a stranger was an almost unheard-of departure for one who so hated and feared all men, yet still longed for warmth. The two spent many hours alone together. Speech, the ordinary instrument of human intercourse, was restricted between them. Wilhelm was checked in his customary fluency by the necessity to use French, while Abdul Hamid, who in any case preferred silence, had only a limited command of the language. But what was an occasional misunderstood word compared with the fascination which these two so widely differing men had for one another? Here was evidence that speech may be over-valued, and that words are not the only pathway to understanding.

It was not the prospect of immediate gain which lent Wilhelm a special attraction in the eyes of Abdul Hamid. Unlike England, France and Russia, Germany possessed no Moslem subjects. But a dangerous source of conflict was thereby removed. And the bond between them was further strengthened by an idiosyncrasy of the Emperor. Wilhelm was a passionate believer in his own appointment by God, and in the divine right of kings in general. Nowhere had the principle of absolutism been more fully realized than in the East, whose ancient kings lived through the centuries in an aura of divinity. A Western ruler in the days of democracy appeared insignificant indeed beside those almost mythical beings who had built the pyramids to shelter their immortal souls. Something of this magnificence still hung about the figure of the Turkish Sultan, despite the backwardness of his people, the debts he owed to Europe and the disgust he had aroused by the massacres in Armenia. It gratified Wilhelm to ally himself to the last true embodiment of absolute rule.

The Sultan's reception of the Emperor rose to the limits of fantasy. Gala dinners were held amid lighting effects which invested the natural magic of the shores of the Bosphorus

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

with a dreamlike quality. The treasure-chamber in the Seraglio, the ancient residence of the Sultans, was a thousand-and-one-nights fable even for the Emperor of Germany. No monarch of the West could rival this collection of jewelled Eastern costumes and weapons, jewelled thrones, costly articles of gold (there were golden fly-catchers and back-scratchers encrusted with gems) and porcelain dinner-services each of a thousand pieces. The fabulous nature of the occasion was enhanced by the fact that in the East the guest need only hint at his desires to have them instantly fulfilled. It was the dream of childhood made real: the coveted object instantly possessed. Wilhelm could not resist a giant emerald which had once glittered on a turban-brooch above the warlike countenance of Sultan Selim I. No sooner did he express his admiration than the emerald was his. The same thing occurred on a number of other occasions, for the Emperor was a great lover of beauty and antiquity.

But it was not only Wilhelm who was exalted during these days in Constantinople: his presence produced a remarkable effect upon Abdul Hamid. During the visit to the mosque on the Friday, an occasion of especial ceremony in honour of the visitors, the Sultan stood upright in his carriage to return the greetings of the crowd. His breast, generally shrunken with the fear of assassination, swelled in the atmosphere of confidence which Wilhelm inspired. For a moment it almost seemed that he might be moved to lay aside for ever the shirt of mail which he wore under his black coat, and therewith to abandon the illusion of security which crippled his activities and robbed him of so many other and more hopeful illusions. But this hope of a fundamental change in Abdul Hamid—an escape from the barriers which he erected between himself and the realities of the outside world, between himself and his own better qualities—was dispelled during the same visit to the mosque. As a beggar-dervish waving a petition broke through the

cordon of soldiers and sought to approach the Emperor, the Sultan relapsed into his customary state of huddled apprehension.

Nevertheless the relations between the two monarchs grew hourly more cordial, their looks and bearing revealed a steadily growing mutual confidence. The air was filled with the expectation of new developments, of great decisions. With the ending of every interview between them Yildiz became rigid with anticipation. Innumerable rumours sped through the town, through the corridors of the Sublime Porte, through the rooms of the ministers who were Abdul Hamid's powerless slaves, through the embassies and the small, dirty cafés, above all through the offices of European banks and industrial concerns. The Sultan was reported to have granted Germany a concession for a new railway to traverse the immense territory from Constantinople via Bagdad to the Persian Gulf. It was said that the engineers who were to construct this backbone of a new Turkish Empire were already on their way. Special agencies sprang up for the selling of land and produce in the districts through which the railway would pass. Money poured through the hands of speculators and still more through their thoughts as with Oriental extravagance they outbid one another for shares in the new enterprise before it had even been decided upon, and while the highlands of Mesopotamia still preserved their primeval calm. Doubters and questioners were referred to the Turkish newspapers, which urged their readers to learn German in order to reap the forthcoming harvest.

The Constantinople business men felt themselves to be alternately millionaires and paupers as fresh rumours gained currency. It was said that Russia had threatened to declare war if Germany were empowered to build the proposed railway. A British fleet was said to be on its way, since England did not intend to allow Germany to achieve a position in Turkey from which she might threaten the route to India. Was the

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

glorious visit to lead to war? But a later rumour, that England was supporting the German initiative in order to weaken the influence of France and Russia in the Near East, had a calming effect. And finally it was reported that the Emperor was leaving Constantinople empty-handed.

The fact was that the Sultan was extremely reluctant to grant the Bagdad railway concession, which the Emperor regarded as the basis of Turkish reform. On the day fixed for the departure of the German royal pair, who were to set forth upon a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, one of the Sultan's daughters, a lovely creature with the grace that characterized young Turkish girls, came to plead with them on behalf of her father to prolong their visit. The bouquet which she handed to the Empress was of precious stones in the form of flowers.

The Emperor had grown impatient. The atmosphere of almost excessive cordiality was suddenly dissipated. He informed the Master of Ceremonies, Munir Pasha, that he could stay no longer, and that if the Sultan should insist upon the customary right of the Oriental host to give his guest leave to depart, he would depart without a leave-taking. It sounded almost like a threat. A failure of the visit, which had cost the Sultan thirty million francs (six millions in presents alone), might betoken the ultimate failure of Turkey. It might even herald the long-awaited collapse and the partition of the Ottoman Empire among the other European Powers, who might take advantage of the break with Germany to form a new alliance, temporary as ever, against the Turks.

However, on October 22nd the Emperor departed with all the outward signs of friendship, but still without the concession. The Sultan gallantly conducted the Empress to the royal yacht. No one knew better than he how to show his respect for a lady.

Only in one quarter of Yildiz did discontent openly manifest

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

itself after the visit was over. The ladies of the Harem were aggrieved. The very announcement of the visit had set them in the highest commotion. No ceremony was prescribed in the Harem for the reception of royal visitors, and the burning question arose, which of the Sultan's many wives was to receive the Empress? They had their own hierarchy in which priority was determined by motherhood, and especially by the bearing of a son, but in which the over-ruling factor was at all times the whim of the Sultan, who made one woman after another his favourite. The difficulty was increased by the fact that the Sultan's mother, traditionally the first lady in the empire, was dead. A number of women chose to regard themselves as the "feminine reflection of the Sultan," and a misuse of etiquette threatened to bring about a revolution among them, excited as they were by the unprecedented sensation of a royal visit. In that atmosphere of constant agitation and mistrust none of the palace dignitaries whose business it was to decide such questions ventured to make a choice, the less so since any of the women might take advantage of an intimate moment to complain to the Sultan. Moreover, the political importance of the occasion was such that a trifle, seen in the light of the widely differing social customs of host and guest, might give rise to serious misunderstandings. And finally Abdul Hamid himself feared to arouse a conflict by favouring one woman at the expense of the others. Accordingly it was resolved that none of the Sultan's wives, but only his daughters, should be formally presented to the Empress.

The fiction of an illness which prevented the Sultan's "wife" or wives from making an appearance was, however, a thin one. It was speedily destroyed by the horde of women—princesses and their suites, ladies of the Court and even slaves—who assailed the Empress with greetings and compliments. Etiquette prescribed that each princess must receive the visitor separately in her own home, there to charm her with dancers,

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

with refreshments and with high-flown flattery of her toilettes; and it was further necessary that each of these visits should be returned. The few days with the Empress spent at the Turkish Court were so filled with these coming and goings that they must have seemed to her like the performance of a complex and monotonous pantomime in which she amiably filled the leading role. The pageant of strange women passed before her, the light and the dark-haired, the old and the young, merging into one insubstantial and for ever incomprehensible Oriental figure, and for all their grace and beauty perhaps shocking the Western lady as she reflected upon the numerous aspects of Eastern family life.

We are led to believe that the Turkish women for their part had no fault to find with the Empress. Nevertheless she left dissatisfaction behind her. She was reproached with an omission which implied in Turkish eyes a lack of breeding. She had not kissed the hands of the Sultan's daughters when she took her leave! So remote were they from the outside world that they had expected the German Empress to salute them as they were saluted by their slaves!

Thus while the past reigned absolute among the highest ladies in the land Turkey sought to link herself with the present and the future. An immeasurable gulf lay between the tired, ancient world of Asia and the new world which was advancing with giant strides. None might foresee the outcome of such a union.

On October 31, 1898, the road from Jaffa to Jerusalem was lined by a dense crowd. Some of them, Arabs, Syrians, Jews and Greeks, had been waiting for many days, for time cost nothing in the East. The magnet which had drawn them from the arid channels of their daily lives was the great "yellow one" (all fair-haired Christians were "yellow ones"), the Emperor Wilhelm II.

Hearing from his outriders of the concourse of people that awaited him, the Emperor was divided between satisfaction and anxiety. The steady growth of Turkish national feeling under Abdul Hamid had been newly stimulated by the conflict in Armenia and by the Turkish victory over the Greeks in the fight for Crete; and Moslem fervour implied in an equal degree hatred of all things Christian, including a Christian visitor. The Emperor caused the people to be described to him, their peaceful bearing, their gaily coloured attire. Who could say whether their flowing robes were solely the expression of a modesty which regarded European fashions as a shameless bodily exposure, or whether they were being used to conceal weapons? Wilhelm, who possessed a knowledge of history as well as a lively imagination, was well aware of the dangers encountered by earlier Christians upon the road he was now travelling; not only the Crusaders, but also those Christians who, coming for peaceful purposes, had lived in poverty, being compelled to wear a distinguishing mark on their garments, to go about the town only on foot and to perform menial tasks whenever a "believer" required them to do so. Despite the warmth of his reception in Constantinople it remained to be seen how, as a Christian, he would be received by the people of a Turkish province. It was not even certain that the Sultan's friendship still persisted, or that the host of yesterday might not have become the cunning enemy of to-day. The German-Turkish treaty of co-operation, which was to include the building of the Bagdad railway, still hung fire although its signature was hourly expected.

The Emperor was accustomed in his imaginative flights to encompass the widest horizons, but during his present journey nothing was too trivial to engage his personal attention. He had himself designed costumes for every occasion, and with a richness of fancy which is well exemplified by the attire in which he entered Jerusalem. On this occasion, indeed, he wore

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

two not wholly related costumes, the flowing veil of a sheik being draped over a suit of medieval armour. It was intended by this ensemble to depict the German Christian knight as the friend of the Moslem world.

The selection of costumes was, however, but one item in an admirable display of showmanship. When the men of the East, awaiting the "Yellow One" with mixed feelings outside Jerusalem, perceived his white, gold-bordered muslin veil, and when, further, they saw him descend from his horse and offer up prayers upon the public highway, their enthusiasm was without bounds. Never had they supposed a Christian to be capable of so lofty a devotion. "This is not a king but a saint!" they cried. So great was the effect of the armour, the veil and the pious bearing of their Christian visitor with his splendid train that a soldier at the edge of the crowd exclaimed, "I believe I have seen the Prophet Mohammed!" There were thousands who shared this view.

The emotional effects which a man produces react upon himself, raising him to new heights of emotion. When he had reached the walls of Jerusalem, Wilhelm again descended from his horse. Closing his eyes like a seer he proclaimed that he wished to gain his first sight of the town standing upon the stone from which his great predecessor, Godefroy de Bouillon, had first beheld it. Nor did he lose sight of the fact that methods of winning the favour of the masses vary from age to age. While he approved of the means adopted by the ancient rulers of the East, who had won the hearts of their subjects by the display of superhuman strength and daring, he believed no less in the material attributes of government, in trade and commerce, and above all in the power of money. Intermingled with the flags surrounding him, which were designed to re-create the spirit of the Crusades, were banners of another kind bearing the insignia of Messrs. Thomas Cook and Son. Piety and trade went hand-in-hand. The visit to the holy places was

to pave the way for the vast export of German ploughshares, machinery and arms which the statisticians had foreseen.

Primarily, however, Jerusalem was a city given over to festivity. The Emperor had conquered it without a battle, forcing the gateway of the East and filling with rejoicing a place which was the ages-old centre of conflict between two hemispheres and three creeds. Proclaiming himself to be a "Knight of Peace and Labour," he spread goodwill on every side, even among those who had hitherto been hostile. Although like the majority of his subjects he was himself a Protestant, he paid a sum of £1,000 for the piece of land on which the home of the Holy Mother was believed to have stood, and presented it to the Catholics as the site of a new church. For centuries German history had been filled with the struggle between Catholic and Protestant, and the Catholics in the Reich were still striving for equality of rights; but the Emperor's reverence for Catholicism in Jerusalem was scarcely exceeded by that of the Pope, to say nothing of his Austrian and Italian allies. He also received Jewish and Moslem delegations. He sent a message of greeting to the Czar, the protector of the Greek Catholics. He cried: "I do not seek power or fame or earthly riches but the healing of souls."

Every detail of his activities was reported and discussed at length in the world's newspapers. The caricatures alone form a chapter of European history. One of the most famous depicts Turkey as a cow, with England, France, Russia and Italy painfully holding her by the head, tail and legs while Germany takes the milk.

The journey was, indeed, a proclamation to the world of Germany's intention to pursue a new policy in the Near East. Wilhelm had previously visited the East in 1889, shortly after his accession, and that earlier visit had been an indication that the youthful new ruler of Germany was a personality capable of independent action. As late as 1888 Bismarck had written

to Siemens: ". . . German traders in the East must consider themselves traders and nothing more. They must not count upon the support of the Reich if they get into difficulties abroad." But since Bismarck's dismissal there had been no hand strong enough to restrain the Emperor's imaginative flights and his Eastern yearnings. His second journey revealed the value of the first. In competition with the French, whose commerce with the East dated from the reign of Louis XIV, and the British, whose Eastern trade went back to the foundation of the East India Company, German merchants had succeeded during the few years which had elapsed in effecting an entry into the Near Eastern market and in increasing German-Turkish trade by 35 per cent. German influence had moreover been consolidated by the marriage of a German princess to the Czar Alexander II, and still more by the placing of a Coburg prince upon the throne of Bulgaria.

Post offices in Constantinople and on the Syrian coast worked overtime, telegraph wires were overladen with Europe's anxiety to learn of every movement the Emperor made and every word he spoke. The Eastern Question had been for centuries one of the turning points of world politics. Was the anxiously preserved balance of power in Europe, already unsettled by the unification of Germany and her victory over France, to be further disturbed by this latest excursion? The Sultan, at Yildiz, was watching no less intently; and Germany, for her part, was keeping a close eye on everything that went on behind her back. Hitherto the postal system of Turkey had been administered by England and France; but a German post office was opened in Jaffa for the occasion of the visit. Thus the Emperor kept an ear turned to the West while he led his cavalcade through the East.

Extraordinary events were taking place in the West. It was possible that the Jaffa post office might one day bring its master the news that war had broken out between England

and France, whose colonial rivalry was approaching a climax. Vast though it was, Africa was yet too small to harbour the ambitions of the two nations. Spreading respectively from the Cape to the Nile, and from Northern Algeria eastwards towards the Red Sea, they had clashed at Fashoda, which was too close to the Nile and the sacrosanct British route to India to be allowed to fall into the hands of the French. The dispute might lead to a new European war. Indeed, it was even possible that war had already broken out, and the possibility was never absent from the Emperor's mind throughout his journey. With England and France fighting over Africa he would have a free hand in Asia. From hour to hour he awaited news from Fashoda and from Constantinople. A part of Germany's destiny depended upon whether the Sultan would decide to grant the concessions while France and England were occupied elsewhere.

An army of a kind never before seen was ready to travel eastward directly the decision was given. It was an army not of destruction but of creation, equipped with all the weapons of modern science to infuse new life into Turkey, to build roads and railways, harbours and canals. Nothing was needed to set this giant enterprise in motion but the Sultan's *irade*, the word of a despot who, without reference to ministers or parliaments, had it in his power at any instant to give consent.

The Emperor visited the places where the Christian faith had lived and suffered. He rode with the Empress up the Mount of Olives, and caused the German flag to fly over Zion. The latest news from Fashoda followed him. It was reported that the British fleet had been reinforced and was held in readiness, that the French had refused to withdraw, that the tension was increasing . . . and then it was learned that the French governor had left Fashoda for Cairo to seek medical treatment for his rheumatism. Was he visiting an English

doctor in Cairo? Did this mean that the great crisis over the mastery of Africa was moving towards a peaceful solution?

Further messages followed which increased the Emperor's chagrin. Threatening English voices sounded in the rear of the German cavalcade. It was suggested in certain organs of the Press that if nations had fought for years for the possession of a single town they might be still more prepared to fight for trade worth two hundred and fifty millions. The name cropped up of a Mr. Wilcox, an English engineer who was sent out to improve the delta of the Tigris and the Euphrates, historic rivers with which the rise and fall of civilization in the Near East was intimately connected. A still more influential name was that of the banker, Rechnitzer, who called upon British capital to take over the Persian Gulf railway and all the enterprises connected with it. Voices were raised in Russia on the side of peace, and Czar Alexander advocated an international conference. But would this mildness suffice to thaw out the Russian harbours which were frozen during a great part of the year? Two-thirds of Russia's export trade passed through Turkish harbours and through the Dardanelles. The Emperor was well aware that Russia's finances would be reduced to a parlous state if her exports to Turkey were endangered by German influence.

Between pilgrimages, ovations and solemn speeches, Wilhelm still feverishly awaited the Sultan's decision. Had his powers of fascination not outlasted his stay in Constantinople? Had the solitary of Yildiz once again hardened his heart? Torn by these doubts the Emperor needed all his energies to produce the emotional effects so often called for during his tour. On November 7th he laid a wreath on the grave of Saladin in Damascus, and in his speech invoked the spirit of Haroun al Rashid, who had been a friend of Charlemagne. "The three hundred million Moslems in the world," he declared, "have no better friend than the Emperor of Germany." He still

hoped for the Sultan's consent before he departed from the East.

But on November 9th he received the report of a speech delivered by Lord Salisbury at the Lord Mayor's banquet on the subject of the tension between England and France. The Prime Minister declared that for the present it was impossible for the nation to abandon its armament policy. War was in the air, principally because the time had come to enter into the inheritance of declining nations. England must arm in the name of peace . . . in order to be ready for every eventuality.

The Emperor brought his journey to an end without visiting Egypt. The omission was a tacit affront to England, another stone in the wall of antagonism that was growing up between England and Germany. The lack of personal sympathy between Wilhelm and his uncle, later to become Edward VII, had been apparent during his visit to the English Court in 1895. Relations were further clouded in 1897, when the construction of the German High Seas Fleet was decided upon and when the Emperor had visited the Russian regatta at Cronstadt instead of attending the Naval Review at Cowes. When he returned from the Near East the shadow of the coming world war already lay across his path.

The conflict between England and France had ended in a victory for England, but Lord Salisbury's utterance made it plain that this colonial dispute would not be the last, that England was prepared for war and that colonies were a major issue in world politics. Europe was agreed that a great redistribution was in prospect; but it remained to be seen how the inheritance was to be shared among the heirs.

## CHAPTER TEN

### FEAR

MODERN psychology offers many definitions of the concept of "fear." The enlightening sentence, "Fear is the expectation of suffering," is too general to be wholly satisfactory. "Courage is the art of concealing fear . . ." makes fear to be nothing but an inevitable manifestation of life. "The less intelligence, the less fear . . ." suggests that fear is the measure of intelligence. Certain of the many philosophical utterances on the subject seem to throw a more direct light upon the character of Abdul Hamid. "Fear is a vice which at times seeks to replace love"; "Every fear is fear of one's self"; "Fear is in part hereditary. . . ."

After the departure of the German Emperor from Constantinople, after this unexpectedly friendly encounter with a Western ruler which gave rise to days of hopefulness such as the sombre Court at Yildiz had never previously experienced, Abdul Hamid fell into an extraordinary state of terror. It was in part the despot's terror of himself, of the limitless extent of his own power and of the danger of losing it. But it was an emotion made up of many components. The warmth engendered by the visit was followed by a reaction. His natural scepticism warned him that Wilhelm's friendship, like that of others, was not to be trusted, and that their cordial meeting might be followed by bitter disappointment. This formless terror seemed to rob him of his power of decision. The German

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

proposals, whose fulfilment was awaited by statesmen and business men in Germany and Turkey—indeed, throughout Europe—with the greatest eagerness, remained unaccepted.

So deeply was he plunged into apprehension, so foundless and irrational were his fears, that the case must be considered partly one of inherited obsession. Seventeen of the thirty-four Sultans of Turkey, after passing the greater part of their lives in secret, terrible expectation, had died a violent death. His mind was haunted by the memory of Mejid, his father, who had been destroyed by fear, of Aziz, whose reign had ended in disaster. And the shadow of the insane Murad, now in his third decade of confinement, still haunted Yildiz.

In the autumn of 1898 an event occurred to heighten his terrors. The Empress Elizabeth of Austria was stabbed to death by an Italian anarchist while on a visit to Geneva. Actually the assassin had intended to make King Umberto his victim, "to atone for the miseries of the poor, brought about by the aristocrats and the rich"; his change of plan was due to the lack of fifty lire—the price of the journey to Rome. So the sufferer had been the beautiful and gallant Elizabeth, who wore a crown with so much reluctance. The murderer's cry at his trial, "Long live anarchy!" rang in the ears of the Sultan of Turkey.

After the departure of the German guests Yildiz was pervaded by an unusual liveliness. The architects responsible for the house in which they had stayed were given fresh tasks. Walls were to be heightened and new walls built. The master gave his orders in person, explaining how small groups of two and three rooms were to be surrounded by corridors. It pleased him when his finger went astray on the plans he himself had drawn, so that amid the maze of rooms and corridors he could not find the exit. Disorder and confusion were what he sought. He wished to create a labyrinth which would make

easy progress about the Residence impossible, thereby damping the ardour of assassins. In order to impede movement from one room to another, he had the corridors filled with furniture, so that two people could not walk abreast. His fear seems to have been narrowed down to the apprehension of a single murderous hand. Several dozen pianos were installed in Yildiz, despite the fact that he could do no more than pick out the notes of a song. But the pianos, like the broad, rococo French beds, were intended principally as decorative barricades.

He gave especial attention to the redistribution of doors and windows, so that as far as possible they did not correspond to the internal arrangement of the rooms; and he took care that none of the builders who served him was permitted to see more than a section of the plans. If no man but himself knew the whole he could feel safer. Safer—but never safe! Finally he succeeded in ordering matters so that from every corner of his favourite houses—even from the bathrooms and the intimacy of the toilet cabinet—he could oversee the entrances and the approach of an enemy. Decorative cages of gaily-feathered birds hung outside the windows. He believed in the old superstition that a parrot screeches at the sight of a stranger.

Many of his days might be likened to wakeful nightmares comprised of different aspects of fear. It began with his early-morning toilet, when a selected group of a dozen women brought him washing water in leaden jugs from special wells. He increased the number of guards over the washing water, and desired to be present at the filling of the jugs. He flung aside the clean underlinen which another group of specialists had made ready for the day, and demanded one of the shirts sold in the bazaars as a “present for the poor.” Such a garment, designed for obscure creatures whose lives were not worth the taking, was not likely to have been poisoned. In the same way he preferred the cheapest tobacco, although the choicest

Turkish leaf was at his disposal. The coarse stuff might rasp the throat, but this was a small price to pay for a triumphant stratagem and the sense of a danger escaped.

No member of his household ventured even to look astonished at the eccentricities which this onset of panic produced. They watched indifferently while he pursued a quixotic warfare against invisible enemies. He ordered any book or newspaper that annoyed him to be used as fuel to heat his bath. He had his meals prepared behind iron doors and served in steel dishes. Many nights he went sleepless, sometimes for forty-eight hours or more on end, and he passed the time wandering from one room to another, from one house to another, listening at doors, boring spy-holes in the walls. He even penetrated into the living-quarters of kitchen-maids and boot-boys, and servants who had never set eyes upon their master were startled out of sleep to find him staring down at them like a ghost. He regarded the lightest ailment as a calamity, since it forced him to place himself in the hands of doctors and dispensers. In order to guard against their cunning he burdened his untutored mind with scientific works, but at the same time he lost none of his superstitions. When he was obliged to take a pill he emptied the contents of several boxes into a bag and drew one with closed eyes, as though he were drawing a lottery. As a rule, however, his mistrust of science caused him to have resort to natural cures—baths, massage and tisanes. Sometimes he caused the brains of a snake to be set before him; and this was declared to be a delicacy, since no one might suggest that the Shadow of God was indisposed.

No one except secretaries and servants was allowed in his immediate presence. Some twenty thousand people worked or dwelt in Yildiz, but each was confined to his own sphere, very often within a single building, without knowing what went on in the next house or how the park appeared around the next bend in the pathway. Officials, translators, servants,

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

soldiers and workmen lived for years and for decades behind invisible bars, and the less each knew of what went on outside his immediate circle the more fanciful were the pictures they conjured up of this mysterious stronghold in which their lives were spent, this closely spun web to which the key was possessed only by the master dwelling in its innermost recesses, and deriving from his invisibility and remoteness a part of his strength. He, on the other hand, knew them all, even the least of his servants and officials. Photography, long condemned by the creed of Islam, rendered him great service and to some extent appeased his desire for omniscience. The study of the thousands of photographs of his employees—endless expressionless male faces, rendered closely similar by the inevitable beard and fez—afforded him intense pleasure. The “portrait album” grew steadily in extent, for the number of spies and soldiers constantly increased; and several men were detailed to perform each task, so that one could keep watch over the other.

From terror to extreme cruelty was only a short step. One of the houses at Yildiz, the Malta Kiosk, achieved a sinister renown: it was the place where suspects were examined. Since it was not far from the menagerie any screams which issued from it could be attributed to the animals. The Sultan was never present on these occasions. Sometimes he listened from a hiding-place in order to make sure that the questions put by his torturers left nothing unexplained, and that they themselves were unswerving in their loyalty, but his squeamish nature revolted from any close approach to the victims. The sight of blood filled him with repulsion. When he personally inflicted a punishment he preferred more refined methods.

Those nearest him, whom he heaped with presents and with flatteries in his moments of good humour, were the worst sufferers from his darker moods. One evening his personal medical attendant, Mavroyeni, an old man who had hitherto

known only the pleasant side of the position of favourite, was requested to act as his amanuensis. Abdul Hamid dictated a scandalous tale which was not only known to all Constantinople, but with which the doctor himself was painfully familiar: it was the history of his own wife, "the beautiful Sarah." Shortly after this unhappy experience Mavroyeni was honoured by a command to accompany the Sultan on a visit to the theatre. The status of the actor in Turkey was still extremely low; the players were mostly men and generally Armenians. They played on these occasions to an apparently empty auditorium, for the ladies of the Harem were invisible behind their curtains and the Sultan and his suite hid in the depths of his box at the back of the house, a situation which made it somewhat difficult to follow the play, but which lessened the danger of assassination. The luckless Mavroyeni had to sit through a harrowing performance, for the piece was based on the tragi-comedy of his own married life. "If you should poison me I shall have revenged myself in advance," explained the Sultan, and the old man burst into tears.

As Abdul Hamid's panic mounted so did his severity increase towards his own family. His brothers and sons, who might, of course, only leave their homes with his express permission, received constantly diminishing allowances. Poverty was another means of restricting their freedom. He invited one of his sisters, the Princess Senieli, to be his guest—that is to say, his prisoner—at Yildiz. Senieli had made some injudicious remarks on the subject of feminine emancipation. But it was his brother Murad who still aroused his deepest misgivings. When his terrors were at their worst and he toyed with the idea of abdication in order to escape the perils of public life, the thought that Murad would benefit sufficed to put it out of his head. Cain was ready to submit to anything rather than bow to Abel. In one of his fits of panic he ordered the "sick brother" to be brought to Yildiz. Murad still lived at the Palace

of Tsheragan, confined behind wooden bars, guarded by deaf-and-dumb eunuchs, and tormented by their overseer, Hassan Pasha, with insults and even with blows. He was allowed neither books nor newspapers. His children were permitted to visit him less and less frequently, and his wives, whose visit had also become rare, still wore clothes of the period when their captivity had begun. Although Tsheragan was only a few minutes distant from Yildiz, the Sultan had not set eyes upon him since the abortive attempt at rescue, more than twenty years previously. Once again the brothers faced one another: an ageing man confronting a living corpse. The years of imprisonment had made of Murad a creature enfeebled in his senses and his desires. In the glaring light beneath which the Sultan caused him to be placed his plump, wilting body trembled with agitation at the change from the familiar, tragic place of his captivity and the presence of strange men. But then a gleam, as though of painful recognition, appeared beneath the swollen eyelids. The sagging muscles of mouth and chin grew tauter. Was the deranged mind striving under the stimulus of shock to regain its long-lost order? It is possible that Abdul Hamid himself at this instant had a sense of weakness, for if Murad by a miracle should become capable of ruling, he, the deputy, was still morally bound to retire. But no miracle took place. Excited by the sight of his brother as though he had been confronted by a wild beast, he ordered him to be taken back instantly to Tsheragan, and into the captivity from which he was destined never again to emerge.

Nor did the Sultan's fears now cease even at the doors of the Harem. In earlier years he had hidden himself among his women, finding a greater happiness in the sense of security than in any love-affair. But now mistrust accompanied him even here. He devised means to test the fidelity of the women. A wax doll made to resemble himself and wearing his everyday attire was placed in a half-lighted room, bent over a book as

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

though he were reading. Hidden behind a screen he watched the women's faces as they approached the figure, observing how some carefully withdrew in order not to disturb him, while others—restless, half-grown children—made of the occasion an excuse for harmless frivolity, creeping up on tip-toe, giggling and exchanging glances among themselves. He was extraordinarily offended by this, and on the following evening he revenged himself by stirring up petty differences among them, arousing so much bad feeling that a violent quarrel broke out after his departure. At first he listened with satisfaction to the angry voices, but as they grew louder he returned without having himself announced, as was customary, by the Mistress of Ceremonies. He found two of the women fighting with small daggers, while the rest, transformed into a raging mob, urged them on. Not even his appearance, the greatest of all events in the Harem, could restore immediate calm. He ordered the two offenders, whose fury he himself had provoked, to be taken away; and the ancient Oriental legend of the disappearance of harem favourites, sewn up in a leather sack, beneath the waters of the Bosphorus, was converted into a tragic truth.

But it was a truth which might not be perpetuated by a glance or a gesture on the part of those who remained. Despite the lateness of the hour dancers and musicians were commanded to appear, and a wild gaiety reigned in the palace. Any break in the monotony of their existence was welcome to the women. They had not many opportunities to wear their jewels and their finest clothes. For some of them, young and extraordinarily beautiful, who had waited for years in vain for a glance from the master, the consciousness of beauty was their only happiness. But the older ladies were no less ready to adorn themselves. A warm wave of feminine desire engulfed the small, elderly man in his eternal frock-coat, in which he was always cold. But he called none of the women to him; his restless

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

gaze, which would become suddenly invisible beneath the drooping lids, did not pause to dwell upon any of the lovely, flowerlike faces. The incident of the fighting women, added to so many sleepless nights and to his constant state of nervous tension, was too much for him, and he fell asleep.

The Mistress of Ceremonies, a lady who had encountered many difficult situations, ordered the musicians to play on. A sudden silence might awaken the sleeper and alarm him. While the instruments sounded and the dancers pirouetted the audience retained the smiles upon their reddened lips. Only gradually, as the festivities died slowly away, did they allow their faces to proclaim the chagrin in their hearts.

Two of the oldest women ventured to approach Abdul Hamid. They had left all thoughts of beauty and seduction long behind them. With motherly care their jewelled hands spread covers over the seated slumberer as though he were a tired child. They propped him up with silken pillows, and they crouched beside him, grotesque guardians in their extravagantly adorned costumes, to watch over his rest and to comfort him in the fear and shame of his awakening. They did not think of words to say to him. They trusted to their instinctive tact, to the musical quality of their voices and to the boundless kindness that filled their hearts.

A ruler—and especially an hereditary, dynastic ruler—is a symbol both of and for his people. He should be the archetype of the national character, reflecting his country's present aspirations and affording his subjects a glimpse of their future. No monument in bronze or stone, and no legend, could better depict the England of the second half of the nineteenth century than the little thick-set figure of Queen Victoria, so modestly and unassumingly clad, with her sober, far-seeing eyes. Mistress of the world in her time, and stripped of all the traditional glamour of princes, she was the essence of the middle-

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

class virtues, industry and respectability incarnate, a figure in a material age at once embodying and enhancing its qualities. Wilhelm II was no less representative in his own way of the German people. His aura of divinity encompassed a remarkably energetic personality having a considerable aptitude for commerce, but in which the normal instincts of the capitalist went hand in hand with a fondness for war. War was still favourably regarded in Germany. The first success of the Union under Prussia had been the victory over France, and for many Germans success and war appeared inseparable.

The ruler of Turkey had been endowed by tradition with a double face, the face of a divinity and of an earthly warrior. The word "sultan" meant "chief", and it referred specifically to the leader of a troop of horsemen; the word "khalif" indicated the successor of the Prophet Mohammed, God's vicegerent upon earth. Abdul Hamid was no reckless conqueror; he was no general and commanded no army; but he was the first Turkish ruler for many generations to show a genuine respect for the old religious traditions, the first true expression of Islam and the East, even if his "eastern" policy had so far only taken the negative form of a general hostility to Europe.

His political strategy in relation to Europe, and the intrigues whereby he kept the European Governments in suspense, playing one against the other, were well known. The majority of Turks were proud of their ruler's skill in these manoeuvres, and were no less ready than he to lie and deceive—for him or against him, or among themselves. Corruption in Turkey grew steadily worse. The deplorable economic state of the country undermined the morale of the people and caused even the highest State officials to become susceptible to the inducement of *baksheesh*, ready to accept large or small bribes in compensation for the irregularity with which their salaries were paid.

This intermixture of piety, respect for ancient tradition and

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

moral corruption was not, however, the only influence which reached the Turkish people, and particularly the people of Constantinople, from Yildiz. The atmosphere of fear which emanated from Abdul Hamid spread its evil, vitiating infection among his subjects. When they opened the morning paper their eyes searched apprehensively for announcements of the "sudden decease" of men who yesterday had been wealthy and respected pashas and beys, and who were now the victims of their ruler's persecution mania. No one dared inquire how their deaths had occurred. These were riddles to fill men's minds with confusion, spreading an undertone of panic through the town. The Sultan forbade the circulation of all printed matter, including foreign newspapers, which ventured to criticize his régime. Electric light and telephones were also forbidden. Who could be sure that the possessor of a telephone might not contrive to send a lethal current over the wires to Yildiz? Nor did he desire a rapid growth of understanding between the different sections of his people, any of whom might be disaffected. No Turkish subject could make even the shortest journey—from one province to the next, or from one town to another—without having a passport and other documents, the procuring of which, from the police, the local council and the customs authorities, took time and money. The number of these documents eventually rose to seven. Often permission to travel abroad was refused for no given reason, but simply because the Sultan regarded with suspicion all those possessing wealth and power. Soldiers searched the furniture-vans of people moving house in Constantinople in order to ensure that they concealed no revolutionaries or stores of dynamite. The inhabitants of the capital were even forced to do without a local postal service and to give up visiting the theatre. When three men sat together at a café table each was apt to suspect the other two of being spies; and not infrequently each was right.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

The Sultan took particular care to curb the freedom of movement of those who entered his presence. Persons admitted to an audience were forbidden to move their arms or legs rapidly. When a certain pasha felt in his pocket for a document bearing upon a statement he was making, Abdul Hamid instantly produced a revolver, being convinced that his visitor was reaching for a weapon; and when another visitor, withdrawing backwards from his presence, slipped and made a hasty movement, he ran out of the room. Any person encountering a member of the Royal Family was obliged to remain rigid and expressionless as a statue, since any display of respect for a brother or son of the Sultan might be construed as a slight to the master himself. On one occasion Surey Pasha, a high palace official, appeared at Court very red in the face and with white flecks on his coat. On his way to Yildiz he had passed the carriage of Prince Reshad, a brother of the Sultan and his probable heir: in order to avoid greeting him he had dived into the nearest shop and fallen into an open sack of wool. This prevailing hysteria, a universal fear-psychosis reflecting Abdul Hamid's own state of mind, was a sinister portent in the life of a nation. In such an atmosphere who could keep his head?

"We are a silent people," declared the Turks. Their silence reached a remarkably high level in Abdul Hamid's time. The list of forbidden words was constantly increased—"freedom," "republic," "revolutionary," "Armenia," "Murad," "dynamite," "bomb" and "assassination" being only the more conspicuous among them. Speech tended to become more and more vague and allusive, and men fell silent in mistrust of one another and in doubt as to which words were still permitted. The general tension, normally hidden beneath Oriental impassiveness, occasionally gave rise to furious outbursts. Rioting would take place in broad daylight in the crowded streets. Shop-shutters would be noisily rolled down, men ran cursing into strange houses, women in hysterics publicly tore

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

the veils from their faces and became more hysterical still as they perceived the offence they had committed against religious law. Wild rumours circulated—"People are being murdered in Galata . . ."; "the priesthood is enraged . . ."; "the Armenians are planting bombs. . . ." Whole districts of the town would be suddenly gripped by a sense of impending calamity; peaceful neighbours would become murderous enemies as their suppressed terrors overcame them; the face of robbery and violence would show itself in the streets . . . and then it would transpire that some quite trivial incident had let loose the panic, or perhaps no incident at all.

Not even at night was the city at peace. Abdul Hamid had his own laws, regardless of those of nature. It was after sundown that he felt himself most alive, his preference for the hours of darkness being symptomatic of his flight from life. Since he reached most of his decisions at night his officials passed their days in the disagreeable expectation of a midnight call to the Residence. Most arrests took place under cover of darkness. People took care to avoid the nightly convoys of ox-carts piled high with long narrow boxes which went under military escort from Yildiz to the harbour. Sometimes they were preceded by rows of young men chained together, their ghostly aspect enhanced by the fact that they wore soft-soled shoes. They were prisoners sentenced to death. The authorities at Yildiz did not always trouble to deliver them in a "finished state" to the shipmasters who waited with steam up, ready to dump them alive or in their coffins in the waters of the Bosphorus.

Even the good work which Abdul Hamid undertook was destroyed by his obsession. Up-to-date schools were built, but shortly afterwards the study of medicine, law and philosophy was forbidden on the grounds that it was a transgression of holy writ. Students who disobeyed this edict were subject to the same penalties as the manufacturers of explosives. The

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Sultan did not lack the wit to see that an army with modern equipment was essential to a healthy State. He brought arms and instructors from Europe—but he forbade the use of modern weapons in training.

And meanwhile the capital and the foreign embassies were waiting in an atmosphere of feverish expectation to learn whether the German Emperor, through his personal initiative, had succeeded in obtaining the concessions which other nations no less desired, or whether after all Abdul Hamid would veer to another quarter. And which quarter? Not only the future of Turkey but the destiny of Europe itself depended upon the attitude which he might finally take towards Europe's plans for Turkish reform.

Despite the walls which surrounded him every trifling rumour relating to the Sultan was spread abroad through the town, penetrating with embellishments into embassies, offices, cafés and never failing to reach the alert ear of the international speculator. Court officials were constantly besieged by the hordes of the inquisitive, and each high dignitary suspected his fellows of "knowing something." The truth was that not one was able to give any precise information, even had he desired to do so; and so they generally refused to give any information at all, preferring to maintain at least the appearance of wisdom. Only fresh rumours were available for the curious, and thus it was reported during this period that every morning a number of divans in the Sultan's private apartments bore traces of having been slept upon.

Abdul Hamid's midnight adventures, his habit of spending the night in different parts of the Residence, were common knowledge. As a rule he did not decide until a few moments before retiring in which room and upon which divan he would first lay himself down—first, because it happened not infrequently that he moved from one divan to another, and from

one building to another, during the night. After the departure of the German Emperor he changed his resting-place particularly often.

It was rumoured that he passed whole nights in solitude, not even being read to. It was said that he often chose to spend the night in the house where the Emperor had stayed during his visit, using the rooms which Wilhelm himself had used, moving about them, caressing the objects they contained. It is certainly true that when the visit was ended he ordered these rooms to be preserved exactly as the royal visitors had left them. Everything, even the bedrooms, had to remain in the disorder of their departure. No man's hand might sully the objects which the hands of the Sultan's "friend" had touched, for these had acquired a superstitious value in his eyes. It may be that at moments when his terrors threatened to overwhelm him he found support in the atmosphere of friendship which Wilhelm had evoked.

Was his exceptional restlessness and apprehension due to the fact that he intended to break with the Emperor, or was it the conception of vast plans arising out of a pact with the Emperor which caused him so many sleepless nights? The price of shares in railways, harbours, mines and telegraphs, still only existing in the imagination of the business world, fluctuated wildly; and the governing factor on this day-dream Stock Exchange was the daily rumour concerning the Sultan's night—whether it had been peaceful, restless, particularly restless, passed on one couch or on several. No one could tell whether he would plunge with a suddenly aroused enthusiasm into the acceptance of Europe's proposals, concluding hasty, ill-considered treaties, or whether all the documents would be used as fuel for his bath.

It is characteristic of him that the German visit should have impressed him even more deeply after it was over. No immediate reality could touch him so surely as the pictures con-

jured up by his own mind. Nevertheless, he had a yearning for tangible work and order. He loved to remember how the seventy thousand soldiers of King Cyrus had fallen upon Mesopotamia, digging dykes, hollowing trees for conduits ("the bridges of plenty"), turning the desert into fertile land. He desired that his will, embodied in a hundred thousand hands, should also tame rivers flowing to no purpose—above all the Tigris, which since its legendary overflowing (the Flood of the Bible) had refused all useful service, wasting its waters in a morass. His soldiers and his labourers should undertake the great work side by side with German soldiers and labourers.

. . . And it may be that at this point his thoughts were checked. Imagination, ranging freely during those restless, solitary hours of darkness, when all life was safely locked out and nothing was quite real except the glimmer of his eternal cigarette, encountered the fatal stumbling-block. The fear arose again, mistrust of all foreigners, all Christians, all Germans; and once again the great vision of the future would grow pale.

He was shrewd enough to know that from his own resources he could do no more than stem the flood of debts bequeathed him by his forebears. He had found Turkey on the edge of a precipice, and had only been able to hold her a step away from the brink. Was it possible for the country to retrieve itself without the aid of foreign money and science? At moments he seemed to allow himself to forget the shortness of human life and to believe in the possibility of ultimate success by his own efforts, an almost imperceptible, endlessly slow progress towards a goal unpredictable in its remoteness. But then the consciousness of reality would return to him. How could he manage without Europe?

"In irrigated Mesopotamian earth an ear of corn increases eighty-fold, whereas in the best European soil it does not increase more than twenty-fold." Thus were the Turks in-

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

formed. "Pharaoh would have despised Egypt had he known Chaldea." The saying of the son of Haroun al Rashid was revived by the Germans, and no words could have been more welcome to the Turkish Sultan. Egypt was the most uncertain of all his provinces. For sixteen years now it had been "provisionally" occupied by the British, and this dubious state of affairs was the best indication of Turkey's helplessness in the face of the Western world. There was no country over which he would more gladly triumph than over England. He would be passionately ready to make the attempt by any means and with any help that was forthcoming, whether from Germany or elsewhere. But at the thought of the revival of Mesopotamia, the ancient land of Chaldea, his fury over the Egyptian affair grew less and Egypt itself seemed unimportant.

His hatred of England, which continued to be a ruling passion, at times made the thought of an alliance with Germany so attractive that misgivings tended to recede. It was at such moments that he would ring one of the many electric bells of which the buttons, visible and concealed, were distributed about his apartments. An instant later a secretary, or one of the women who acted as an amanuensis, would appear noiselessly in the doorway. But when he attempted to dictate the draft of an agreement he could never get beyond the leading phrases. Although his natural intelligence enabled him to master a project in outline, his lack of experience and training prevented him from working out in detail a plan which involved the meticulous division of labour and profits. His thoughts fell helplessly into confusion and finally were lost in revival of his fears—fear of war, of a Russian invasion, of the British fleet. The conception of the balance of power in Europe had been so long bound up with the principle of Turkish neutrality that an alliance between Turkey and Germany threatened to let loose a world war which might lead to a final Turkish collapse. The empire needed peace for its reconstruction.

Thus the decision to come to terms with Germany weakened at the very moments when it seemed to be taking shape. When the door had closed behind the impatiently dismissed secretary he would leave the couch on which he had been reclining and move elsewhere, once again to seek repose from that endless conflict between bold imaginings and terrified indecision. At times he was surprised to find himself in another place, as though some will outside his own had brought him there, and he would fall asleep under the influence of the sudden change. But more often it needed a conscious effort of will to combat the sleeplessness imposed on him by his tormented thoughts.

As the years passed his care and affection for his collection of wild animals had increased. Whenever he entered the park his unattractive figure, which in the world of men called forth so many disagreeable emotions, became the centre of clusters of eager, graceful creatures sufficient in their variety to fill a Noah's ark. They were brought from every corner of the earth and made at home in the broad, well-tended grounds and carefully-heated stalls of Yildiz. Swarms of doves fluttered about him; camels, gazelles and ostriches accepted food from the hand which had signed so many death-warrants.

Animal-dealers awaiting orders were constant visitors to the European hotels in Pera. But the latest demand from Yildiz brought them to confusion. The Sultan wanted a wild cat. Cats had always been among his favourites. He possessed a remarkable collection—shaggy, long-tailed, round-headed felines from Ankara, and rough-haired, long-headed beasts with mask-like features from Siam. His desire for a wild cat (the expression of a desire by the master caused the rarity of its object to be forgotten: the greater the difficulty in satisfying his whims, the greater their importance) resulted in the sending of a section of soldiers into the district of Adrianople. They returned empty-handed, their clothes torn

by the undergrowth, their hands and faces bloody, trembling in anticipation of their ruler's wrath. In the end one of the gardeners at the Residence succeeded with sulphur fumes in driving a red-brown, bristling animal into a trap. The creature became the Sultan's constant companion. He had a cage installed in one of his living-rooms, and every visitor was invited to admire the new pet. Servants and even ministers were required to put their hands through the bars of the cage, as though to stroke the animal, which became furious at the sight of strangers. Nothing delighted Abdul Hamid more than to watch the efforts of these dignified persons to disguise their fears, partly from self-respect and partly in order to preserve a correct demeanour in his presence. The wild cat was thus added to the company of evil spirits which haunted Yildiz: but it was not clear whether it expressed Abdul Hamid's sense of imprisonment, or whether, as a symbol of extreme freedom, it somehow gave him the illusion of being free.

Even more than other crowned heads he expressed his true nature in deeds rather than in words. Yildiz was one day intrigued by a new mystery. A red silken curtain was hung over a blank stretch of wall in one of his private rooms. Only after he had ceased to occupy the Residence were others permitted to see what was hidden behind it. It was a painting. The Mohammedan religion forbade the making of pictures on the grounds that it was an incursion into the creative sphere of God; but Abdul Hamid's picture, the sole picture of an extremely devout Mohammedan, was itself a tribute to Islam and the East.

It depicted a group of men in a small boat upon a lake. They wore the *soutanes* of Jesuit priests, the embodiment of Christendom in the Sultan's eyes, and were portrayed in grotesque attitudes, as though they were drunk, with flutes and fiddles in their hands. Their gaze was directed towards the shore for which their vessel was heading, where a row of naked

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

women were being led by the Devil in a dance. The whole crude affair was a unique expression of Abdul Hamid's innermost thoughts, an open, unequivocal avowal of his hatred of all things modern and European. For, seeing himself as the protector of the East, the last guardian of an imperilled Asia against a godless, hypocritical and depraved Europe, he had caused his own portrait to be painted into the picture—as a solitary figure standing on the opposite shore of the lake, confronting the place of sin.

It is not easy to account for the apparent contradiction which caused the picture to be hung in Yildiz shortly after the Emperor's visit. He had come very near to allying himself with Germany. Had he at the last minute caused his inward misgivings to be embodied in a picture so that it might encourage him to abandon the idea of any connection with Europe, or was it only after his friendly encounter with Wilhelm that he perceived the extent of the gulf separating his empire from the Western world?

During those troubled months which followed the German visit innumerable European applications for concessions in Turkey were received. The Sultan, as a rule so industrious, did not even trouble to have the documents read to him. He caused them to be placed on a shelf in one of his private rooms, and frequently he was seen in their neighbourhood, walking slowly past them, slightly bent, carrying in his right hand the light stick which he now used even indoors, while his gaze with its accustomed restlessness travelled over his surroundings. The whole power of government in Turkey resided in the hands of this single man who since his meeting with the German Emperor had become more enigmatic than ever, inscrutable even to those nearest him.

Among all the thousands of inhabitants of Yildiz not one was truly his friend. He kept near to himself two classes of men: those whom he believed to be his abject slaves—and

his especial enemies. On occasions he would summon to his presence traitors and would-be assassins who had only by chance failed to murder him. He would give them coffee and cigarettes (which they must have suspected of containing hideous, slow-working poisons), and talking with dignity and almost wisely would try to persuade them that he was not the sole cause of all the troubles of Turkey. His morbid, terrified spirit seemed to derive sustenance from these interviews. He seemed to need such visitors as the man who has fallen victim of a drug needs an antidote.

One of the small circle to whom he accorded a certain intimacy—a grotesquely ill-assorted company which included his foster-brother and Master of the Wardrobe, Izzet, his chamberlain, Lufi Aga, and his dentist, Dr. G.—was the Court Astrologer, Abdul Huda. During this period of crisis Abdul Huda became his constant companion. But presently he was joined by two other men, whose lack of official status might have given rise to some embarrassment on a ceremonial occasion. Neither was a statesman or an ordinary Court parasite. They were sheiks—Sheik Shaffer, of Tripoli, and Sheik Jemaleddin, of Persia. The choice of these advisers was highly significant. It was an indication that at length the period of indecision was drawing to a close.

At this crucial juncture in his country's affairs Abdul Hamid had resolved upon his course. Henceforward he would regard himself in the first place as the Khalif of all Islam, and only second as the Sultan of Turkey.

The European applications for concessions continued to be ignored. The Sultan began to devote himself, with an industry that became feverish, to quite other tasks. His personal leaning had never been towards reform on Western lines. After decades of compromise with the West his love of the traditions of his country and his Moslem piety were made the basis of a definite

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

pan-Islamic political programme, with the slogan, "Moslems unite!" The appeal was not intended in the first place to promote political unification but the consciousness of unity.

Turkey's evolution in relation to Europe had hitherto passed through two stages: there had been a period of conquest directed against the West, followed by a period of imitation of the West. A new epoch was now to begin, of which the guiding principle was to be, "Cut loose from Europe!" At the very moment when Europe seemed to be approaching a high point in its development the Turkish Sultan proposed to turn away from the Continent. But the decision was not due solely to Abdul Hamid's personal feeling, nor, despite his love of conflict, was it merely an empty protest against the existence of Europe. His personal hatred of all things European only served to enflame the fanaticism with which he pursued the pan-Islam policy once it was decided upon. The decision was logically arrived at: it was the outcome of his conviction that Turkey, at her existing stage of evolution, was no more ready for a European alliance than she was able to go to war with a European Power.

Abdul Hamid's childhood memories included that "happy time" of the Crimean War—the alliance with England and France which was the beginning of Turkey's catastrophic indebtedness. He was very conscious of the extravagance of his most recent forebears and had personally avoided the display of Oriental luxury; but he was also aware that Turkey's present financial state was due far less to the reckless spending of her Sultans than to the fact that the attempts at reform after the Western pattern had been fundamentally unsound. It had been a process of reform from the wrong end. Turkey had begun to consume modern goods but not to produce them.

To link the destiny of the empire with that of Germany or of any other European nation must involve an increasing consumption of products which in the early stages would neces-

sarily come from Europe; it would mean a new plunge into indebtedness unforeseeable in its extent, and a further mortgaging of the natural riches of Western Asia which the Europeans, recalling the ancient magnificence of the land, so fervently extolled. It would involve, in effect, the sale of Western Asia to Europe, and the subjection of Turkey no less than if she had suffered a military defeat.

The impression he had formed on his one visit to Europe of the overwhelming power of European capital still remained in his mind. And surely his twenty-three year effort to promote the revival of Turkey afforded sufficient evidence that no rapid revival was possible, nor any rapid rise to European levels. He had set up an agricultural bank and had founded schools of agriculture; he had infused new life into the cotton-fields, had caused thirty million mulberry-trees to be planted, and had founded an institute at Brussa for the cultivation of silk-worms on the Pasteur system, in order to enable Turkish silk production to compete again in the world market. Turkey in Europe alone exported three million kilogrammes of wool annually to France; the district of Adrianople exported £1,750,000 worth of cereals, and olives and tobacco also brought foreign money into the country. But despite all these efforts the privations of the Turks were even greater than in the past, for the more they earned the more they paid. He was squeezing every last halfpenny out of the people in order to pay off old foreign debts. The annual service of the Ottoman Debt had risen from £887,000 in 1882 to £1,400,000 in 1902, but this did nothing to diminish the gigantic burden of indebtedness piled up in preceding decades.

He lost all hope of making the country independent of Europe by the repayment of debt. The long-desired economic revival, and the restoration of the power of Islam, must be achieved by other means. Since conflict with the West in any material sense was impossible, he gave up the hopeless struggle,

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

and after more than twenty years of rule resolved that the self-assertion of Turkey must be based upon an entirely new policy—nothing less than the renunciation of materialism.

It was customary in Europe to talk of the "contempt for the use of energy" displayed in the Orient, and the fallow fields, neglected rivers and undeveloped mineral resources were held to exemplify the phrase. Abdul Hamid reversed it: he proclaimed his scorn for the "European genius," now advancing to world-mastery, by denying the intrinsic worth of its scientific and industrial achievements. While Europe pursued the goal of a higher standard of living for the masses, he proclaimed the worthlessness of earthly comforts and even the perils of too much earthly well-being. He repeated the words of Mohammed: "Those who now wear silken garments shall not wear them in eternity," and "The fires of Hell shall feed upon the entrails of those who now feed from golden dishes." While European Governments gained the support of their peoples with promises of higher wages, better dwellings, greater leisure and old-age pensions, he based his new policy of social welfare upon exactly opposite foundations—he sought to make the Turks into a nation of ascetics. With the European applications for concessions still piling up on his shelves he extolled the virtues of earthly poverty and humility.

He declared that he wished to reform first the spirit and then the "body" of his empire. Only when the Turks had become spiritually stiffened in relation to Europe by a revived Mohammedan consciousness, and by a sense of the unity and separateness of the Moslem world, did he propose to allow that closer approach which technical developments had rendered possible; only then was the New Age to become a reality for Turkey. He considered it his first task to belittle all modernism in the eyes of his subjects, and to protect them from the allurements of the European way of life as from the Devil himself.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

This call for Moslem unity and self-determination, the first appeal in modern times to the conscience of the East, is Abdul Hamid's great contribution to history. He set his will against the great nations of the earth and against the flooding tide of Western materialism; he shaped a political programme, extending far beyond the boundaries of a man's life, which was the first resounding proclamation of a new future for the East, even if the concept of pan-Islam was not a new one. After centuries of material decline, followed by inadequate and fruitless attempts at reform, Turkey was aroused in the depths of her poverty and disorder to the need for purification and retreat from the things of this world. No outstanding religious personality arose to lead this campaign for spiritual revival, no Luther or Savonarola. It was not the voices of individuals which arose from the steppes, but the collective voice of races and brotherhoods. There was, for instance, the religious order of the Wahabits, who preached a doctrine of asceticism to counteract the influence of the West. Above all there were the Mahdists, who awaited the coming of a new Messiah. God had already appeared six times upon earth—as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed. What was his newest and last name to be? When would he again appear, to restore the reign of righteousness after the long decline of Islam, for which the law-breakers were responsible, and to prepare for that Last Judgment which was to mark the end of the world? Was it possible that Abdul Hamid, ugly, prematurely aged, was the awaited saviour? Could it be that his past life, and the many unattractive qualities which had made him a burden to himself and a scourge to others, were no more than a trial sent by heaven?

From his retirement in Yildiz Abdul Hamid broadcast the clarion-call, "Islam awake!" far and wide through his dominions. There was no shortage of pan-Islamic propagandists. In Constantinople alone there lived more than forty

thousand Moslem students of theology whose business it was to sway souls by their eloquence, and above all to combat the Western reforms, which threatened their existence. The campaign against materialism was, however, confronted by great material difficulties. Not only did the immense territorial extent of Turkey, which still exceeded that of any European nation, hinder the circulation of ideas, but means of transport were lacking. Apart from the main railway-line from Constantinople to Ankara there existed only local lines running from the Mediterranean and Black Sea harbours, which did not penetrate inland. Even at the end of the century the only real roads were the ancient caravan routes running, apart from those which reached the capital, from Persia through Armenia to the Black Sea, and from Mesopotamia to Syria and the Mediterranean. The land was still in a state of primitive culture. In the interior the tough, harsh nature of the steppes had survived repeated attempts at civilization, and the rank grass growing shoulder-high hid the traces of man's attempts to establish himself in the monotonous highlands, often extending for hundreds of miles, where the solitary wanderer was destroyed by hunger and thirst, by frost or burning sand, or by the attacks of nomads no less primitive and lawless than the region from which they sprang. But despite the vastness of the country and the variety of its inhabitants, the people of Turkey had one thing in common which greatly facilitated the work of the apostles of pan-Islam: they were all extremely poor. The Sultan's emissaries were themselves poor men, but they now discovered that poverty is relative. Every change of climate and landscape in the huge empire revealed new aspects of privation and suffering.

In many places (even in the lowlands of Cilicia, not far from the capital) the scanty, stagnant river-water caused the spread of malaria, transforming the people into living skeletons crouched round their camp-fires even in the height of summer.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

The appearance of a stranger scarcely aroused them from their apathy, but the arrival of the "holy men", with their tale of the happiness awaiting even the most wretched of devout Mohammedans in the after-life, kindled in them a new spark of vitality, a readiness to praise Allah and His Prophet, and to proclaim their loyalty to Islam and the Khalif in Constantinople. There were places, plunged now in the deepest distress, where the impermanence of earthly splendour was even made manifest—in slabs of stone bearing Greek and Latin inscriptions, in denuded pillars and other traces of a civilization that had long since passed away.

Not far from the small oases in Mesopotamia, with their sparse growth of date-palms, there existed a region whose inhabitants were daily subjected by heaven to a fresh trial of their patience and humility. Each midday, when the sun shone most intensely, the district of Hit revealed its unpleasant nature in a thin, viscous fluid which oozed up from the earth and trickled down the walls of the houses, infecting the landscape and afflicting man and beast with its evil smell. It was oil. So rich was the region in petroleum that roads were covered by its solidified lava, and it was used, in default of other materials, for the building of houses and the fashioning of household appliances. Oil wells had been known to exist in Mesopotamia since the days of the "holy fires" of Baku, but it was only recently that the invention of the petrol-engine had caused oil to become a matter of the greatest interest to the West. The inhabitants of Hit were, however, still unaware that they were the guardians of a treasure, and that the stench which made their daily lives a curse was the portent of almost limitless wealth. The fumes of oil reddened their eyes and inflamed their throats. With hoarse voices they responded to the emissaries of the Khalif, sent to tell them that in Allah were all riches, and that in Him alone would they find strength to bear their sufferings in this life.

The Turkish towns were confined to the sea-coasts; but the Sultan's call to Islam was directed not so much towards the tepidly devout town-dwellers ("half-Europeans") as towards the mass of population inland. The representative Turk was the nomad, the herdsman with his sheep, horses and camels who wandered tirelessly, driven by the seasons, in search of fresh pastures. He lived on the flesh and milk of his beasts, clothed himself in their skins, and slept in a tent of felt; but despite his simple needs his life was passed in unremitting combat with Nature and with his fellows. He had little prospect of a tranquil old age or even of security during the coming winter, and he could count on no help for himself or his children if sickness should overtake him. Chance, which he called *kismet*, ruled his life; yet he felt himself to be the possessor of two incomparable treasures, unrestricted freedom upon earth and the certitude of bliss in heaven.

He ensured his admission to that mild Moslem paradise, where lambs for roasting browsed in eternally green pastures and the loveliest of *houris* ministered to the needs of pious Mohammedans, by following the simple rules laid down by his religion. He prayed daily with his face turned to Mecca, indulged in ritual ablutions and was charitable to those even poorer than himself. The last, indeed, was a natural instinct in these primitive people, who were, on the other hand, capable of any act of violence.

Freedom was his greatest possession. Had the missionaries from Constantinople announced that they came from the Sultan they would have been received with anger or not at all: it happened repeatedly that the Sultan's garrison and his tax-collectors were violently chased away. But the servants of the Khalif—which is to say, of heaven itself—coming in his name to preach fidelity to Islam, were received with honour. When they appeared the herdsmen gathered together, for had not Mohammed said that a prayer spoken in unison with others

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

had seven-and-twenty times the force of one spoken by a single mouth? The chorus rolled over the Asiatic landscape—"Great is God, great is God, there is no God but God and Mohammed is His Prophet, the great liberator and Lord of all the world. Great is God, great is God, there is no other God but God."

When between prayers and blessings the missionaries let fall a word concerning the "heathen cunning" of Europe, and their plot to Europeanize Asia, they were more likely to meet with indifference or contempt for European ways than with any great curiosity. The herdsmen knew nothing of "reforms" except that they meant taxes, compulsory military service and forced labour for road-building. The older men had not forgotten the introduction of the salt tax in the 'sixties, which had forced them to reduce the ration of salt for their sheep, thereby impairing the quality of the wool and diminishing the beauty of the famous Anatolian carpets. The pan-Islam propagandists took advantage of such recollections to depict everything Western as evil, dangerous and cruel. They told glowing tales of the brutality of Europeans in their colonies, represented their factories as infernos in which slaves laboured to exhaustion, and made their towns to appear hotbeds of crime and suicide. None had ever set foot in Europe, but the report of "European atrocities" had received official warrant in an open letter which the Sultan had caused to be circulated throughout the empire in answer to the storm of foreign abuse provoked by the Armenian massacres.

For all his remoteness Abdul Hamid knew the nature of his people and the gulf which sundered them from the peoples of the West. The Turk was in every respect the opposite of the products of modern Europe, the middle-class citizen and the proletarian whose whole desire was to rise to the middle class. The nomad despised all house-dwellers and safe citizens: his safety lay in heaven. It was Abdul Hamid's purpose to inspire in him an active loyalty both to heaven and to himself

as the Shadow of God. His missionaries cried: "You must deliver yourselves into the hands of your sheiks as the dead are delivered into the hands of the body-washers." The sheiks were religious leaders, but he saw them as the instruments of his will, instruments of the despotism with its aura of divinity which he desired to raise above all other powers and to protect against all onslaughts.

The pan-Islam programme included the printing of thousands of copies of the Koran, which were distributed throughout the land; but it may be doubted whether they were of much value in a country whose people were largely illiterate, and who regarded the Koran principally as a sacred relic having little relation to the living word. Nor was there any need for prepared political speeches. It was simply a matter of adapting for political purposes ideas which had been on the lips of devout Moslems since the days of Mohammed. The wandering dervishes, who were to be found in the poorest regions, were ready helpers, and their hypnotic powers were an invaluable aid to propaganda. They preached the "mastery of the terrors and tribulations of this world by a heightened piety, by indifference to pain, to hunger and to cold, and by detachment from all outward circumstances through a sense of the identity of the human soul with God." They believed in the power of love, of personal magnetism and of the will. They cried that the world was no enduring dwelling-place and that none should feel at home in it. So great was the will-power stored in their emaciated bodies that few could remain unaffected. Few could be unmoved by the spectacle of the wild dances in which they seemed to overcome the law of gravity, just as they triumphed over men's senses, careering with a dizzy speed in circles, spinning on their own axes, each a repository of the divine grace, a symbol of mystical union with the God whose name they loudly proclaimed until with foaming mouths they fell exhausted to the ground. These holy brotherhoods

had always existed among the Mohammedans. Now they, too, were made to serve Abdul Hamid's purpose in the remotest parts of his realm.

Abdul Hamid did not content himself with advocating the cause of Islam within the Turkish frontiers. His call was to all Moslems, in Russia and Northern Africa, in India, in China. His resolve to save Turkey and the East from a decisive conquest by Europe had its roots deep in the past. A twelve-hundred-year-old problem must now at length be solved—the schism which had split the Moslem world into the two sects of Sunnites and Shiites. This dispute, which divided all Mohammedans into bitterly hostile camps of "true believers" and "heretics," was far older than the antagonism between Catholic and Protestant Christians. It had arisen upon Mohammed's death out of the question of his successor. Upon whom should the mantle of the Prophet fall? His son-in-law, Ali, the husband of his daughter, Fatima, had opposed the right of Mohammed's youngest wife, Aisha, to administer the inheritance and to confer the vicegerency upon her father, on the ground that she had been unfaithful. This slur upon the most beloved of the Prophet's wives occasioned a conflict, lasting through the centuries, which assumed a political form when, in the sixteenth century, the rulership of Persia fell to a Shiite dynasty, deadly enemies of the Sunnite Sultan of Turkey, who aspired to be universally recognized as the Khalif of all Moslems.

The task of ending this ancient quarrel was now undertaken by Abdul Hamid. The man for whom nothing was too small to arouse his secret terrors embarked upon a programme in which nothing appeared too vast. He did not hesitate to direct his appeal to three hundred million people, to attempt to assert his will in three continents, and to treat a conflict more than a thousand years old as though it were a passing difference of opinion.

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

He judged the Sheik Jemaleddin, one of the leaders of the pan-Islam movement, to be the right man to transform the traditional feud between Turkey and Persia into friendship, and to bring Persia under the sway of the Khalif. Jemaleddin was himself a Persian, alternately adviser and bitter enemy of the Shah. He was a unique figure, cosmopolitan as were few Orientals, familiar with East and West and with the life of Bagdad and Tripoli, Constantinople and London. He had studied the philosophies of Greece and Rome, the Bible and modern science, and Biblical words mingled with the most modern phrases in his speech.

At the Sultan's bidding he entered into correspondence with numerous leading Persians whose help was desired in winning Persian allegiance. "The evil tales concerning the mother of all True Believers, the virtuous Aisha, shall be for ever silenced." The twelve-hundred-year-old poison must no longer infect all the mighty body of Asia. Shiites and Sunnites must come together in order to withstand the attempts of Europe, so insignificant in comparison with Asia, to dominate the world. Abdul Hamid described Turkey as the "window of Islam"—the window from which a new light was to shine.

These grandiose projects did not, however, save him from his personal terrors. If he admired Jemaleddin he also feared him. He saw to it that each of his letters was scrutinized by more than one person, and he had them read aloud to him by persons too stupid to be dangerous. It was not enough, however, to listen to Jemaleddin's words, for as he himself proclaimed, his aspect and gestures were so eloquent as to be understood even by those who knew no language. The Sultan therefore hid behind a screen while he dictated letters and interviewed the agents of the pan-Islam movement. Anxiously he watched every expression of the Sheik's face. He was the evangelist of the great revival of the East, but his attitude was still that of a frightened child.

## PAN-ISLAM AND THE OIL WELLS

**O**N August 31, 1900, Abdul Hamid celebrated his Silver Jubilee. Twenty-five years had passed since the day when, unawaited and undesired, he had first ridden as a ruler through the unfriendly streets of Constantinople. Contrary to all the prophecies he had kept his throne; and despite everything which sundered him from his people, his morbid fears and freakish whims, the fearful severity with which he crushed any attempt at opposition, the persecution of the innocent and interference with private lives, he had achieved a popularity such as few earlier Sultans had known. He was the ruler of the humble, a symbol of the tradition of Islam and the East. He promised to lead the Moslems towards a better future, and he was the first, after two hundred years of retreat, to dare to defy the Western world. "Let us not be dazzled by the West. . . . Salvation does not lie in Western civilization alone." These beliefs, which he constantly repeated and to which he clung, caused others to believe in him.

He was now described as "the pearl of Ottoman Sultans" and "the bright star in the Heaven of the Khalifat." Tributes reached him from every part of the earth where Mohammedans lived. The most pompous official reports no less than simple letters from the provinces bear witness to the success of the pan-Islam movement and to the attachment of hundreds of millions of men to the strange, invisible personage at Yildiz.

After the Armenian massacres, now four years distant, leading figures in Britain and France had reviled him as a murderer; but the representatives of foreign Powers who came to attend the Jubilee, bearing the greetings of their rulers, had only flatteries upon their lips. Among the countless good wishes reaching him during that year were certain petitions which gave him especial satisfaction. A musician in Paris, a Saxon merchant and a south-German chemist were anxious to become eunuchs at the Turkish Court. Their requests were politely refused, but the mere thought of Europeans as "sentinels at the Gates of Happiness" was pleasing to the Sultan. This whim of a few abnormal individuals appeared to him an expression of Europe's respect for the East.

The most important guest in his eyes (and in the eyes of all Moslems) was, however, the Shah of Persia. The desired reconciliation with Persia had been successfully accomplished: an epoch-making event for Islam and the East, and a warning to those European nations which, having achieved the subjugation of Africa, were now turning their attention to Asia. The handclasp of Shah and Sultan betokened the ending of the schism which had for so long weakened the Moslem world. Europe appeared trifling by comparison. Persia alone was three times the size of France.

But despite the improved position of Turkey and his personal triumph, Abdul Hamid in the solitude of the Residence still sighed that no one loved him. The honour in which he was held by the mass of the people, the devotion of his women, his officials and his personal attendants, still did not suffice to rid the mature and ageing man of the chills which had beset him since childhood. Could any proof of friendship really convince him? Although he was well aware of his political success and for a time seemed to enjoy an almost exaggerated triumph over Europe, he remained unhappy, frightened and suspicious, a man constantly imperilled by his own instincts.



ABDUL HAMID, IN OLD AGE



### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

The festive atmosphere of the Jubilee year was heightened by his resolve to build a railway to Mecca, the Holy City. "To every Mohammedan his pilgrimage and a certain entry into Paradise." He proposed to sweep away the material obstacles which had hitherto lain in the way of carrying out the divine injunction, so that all, even the weak and the old, might share in the grace to be derived from laying hands upon the tomb of the Prophet. The holy railway would also protect pilgrims from the brigands whose greed was not to be appeased by the richest offerings (the yearly toll for the "appeasement" of the Bedouins amounted to about £750,000). He headed the subscription list in September with a personal contribution of a quarter of a million dollars. A prince from the Ganges contributed a million francs for the station at Medina. Mohammedans living at the greatest distance from Mecca, their spiritual home, were among the most generous—perhaps because remoteness makes the heart grow fonder. The excessive enthusiasm of the needy Moslems on the Sunda Islands forced the Dutch authorities to take special measures to prevent them from starving themselves before the railway was completed. The total sum needed for the construction of the 1,200 miles of track was estimated at £3,000,000, assuming that the workers—soldiers and peasants recruited locally—went without wages. They would have their reward in heaven. In order to raise funds the Sultan ordered a 10 per cent reduction in the salaries of certain officials for one month, and he converted the Maria Theresa thaler, at that time circulating in Turkey, into the worthless "medidie." The proceeds from the sale of the skins of several hundred thousand sheep slaughtered on a particular feast-day were also devoted to the railway, and a special stamp-duty on petitions to the State was instituted. This last item benefited from the fact that most Turks, in their mistrust of bureaucratic methods, sent in their petitions in triplicate.

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Mohammedans in the remote corners of Asia, hitherto ignorant of railways, believed that the railway to Mecca, the "iron camel," was wholly the work of the Shadow of God. Abdul Hamid's melancholy countenance with its ugly hooked nose pervaded the lands of Western Asia, an illusion of hope in the minds of countless hungry men.

But the railway was also a source of peculiar anxiety, for the "Arabian problem," a standing conflict in Turkey, had become acute. The Arabs were the aristocrats of the Ottoman Empire, the "truest" Mohammedans. Their country had only been conquered at the cost of heavy fighting, and they had never been really subjugated by the Turks. It was in Arabia, moreover, that the Prophet had arisen. The Arabs recognized the Sultan as their official overlord, but not as the Khalif of Islam. It was by no means certain that they would permit their country to be linked by a railway with the Turkish capital, still less that they would accept the Turkish ruler as the leader of an Islamic revival.

For the Khalifat, like every other Turkish possession, had come as the booty of war. The sacred tradition of Islam prescribed that the successors of the Prophet should be related to him by blood; but since the year 1517 the succession had passed into the hands of the Osman dynasty, who were in no sense the descendants of Mohammed. So confused had been the course of events in Western Asia during the thousand years following Mohammed's death that amid the countless wars, migrations and changes of power not even the seat of the Khalifat had remained unchanged. Nor had an unbroken succession been preserved. From Mecca, where it had been held by the direct descendants of the Prophet, it had travelled to Bagdad, where the highest office was assumed by the Persian royal dynasty, the Abassides; thence it had gone to Cairo and to the Fatimides; and finally it had reached Constantinople. In the process it had lost much of its ancient authority, and

by the time Abdul Hamid succeeded to the holy office it had become little more than an historic survival, a collection of decorative insignia, including the remnants of a mantle of the Prophet, which the Turkish ruler was accustomed to kiss on the most important feast-day of the year, and such relics as a hair of the Prophet's beard and his green flag of war. So long as it remained in this state, having little practical significance, the Arabs were prepared to accept a Turk as Khalif. But if the status of the spiritual leadership of Islam were restored, if it became again a symbol of power and a portent of the revived significance of Islam in world affairs, it was possible that they would demand the Khalifat for themselves.

Thus Abdul Hamid's gratification at the success of the pan-Islam movement was dimmed by his constant fear of the Arabs. He caused money to be distributed among the Arab chiefs, entertained them royally whenever they honoured the capital with a visit, but could never buy himself the assurance of complete safety. Certain of those nearest him, among them the astrologer, Abdul Huda, and his Master of the Wardrobe, Izzet ("Arabli"), were Arabs, but the allegiance of a few individuals was no compensation for the threatened hostility of twelve millions. His terror of Arab rivalry for the Khalifat assumed such proportions that it became nothing less than a terror of the last judgment, at which he might stand condemned in the very event of the success of his life-work, the pan-Islamic revival. Positively the nose on his face might bear evidence against him; for if it did not lie, and if the reports of his descent from an Armenian father were true, what would be heaven's punishment for his audacity, as a Christian and a usurper, in daring to proclaim himself the saviour of Islam?

Earlier Sultans had been accustomed to lay aside for a time the burdens and privileges of office in order to undertake the sacred pilgrimage, which was prescribed for rulers no less than

for ordinary men, in order that the humbling experience might redress their pride. For a long time past the custom had been abandoned, from a preference for the flesh-pots and from fear of travel, particularly travel in Arabia; and for Abdul Hamid, whose terrors approached to the very threshold of his residence, such a journey was out of the question. In compensation he caused the pilgrimages to be described to him in detail, so that he could conjure up the scenes and know by proxy the fervour of the pilgrims.

He knew the whole story of those week and month-long wanderings over rough ways, during which the wanderers lived withdrawn from the common life and even from the life of their own bodies, averting their eyes from the sight of a veiled woman, keeping guard over their tongues and in especially exalted moments refraining even from swallowing their own spittle. After the long slow progress from the remote parts of Asia and Africa a short pause was made at the holy caravans of Scutari, there to receive presents from the Sultan, whose capital the devout travellers might only view from the opposite shore of the Bosphorus. Thence they travelled by way of Beirut to Damascus; and in Medina they exchanged their worldly garments for the robes of atonement and began to fast. After eight days of atonement the cry of triumph at last rang out as they greeted Mecca, the object of their pilgrimage. A thousand voices cried the word which for centuries had been magic in Mohammedan ears—"Sabik! Sabik! My haven! My haven! . . . We are in the nine-times holy town!" With sweat upon their faces they pressed into the sombre, simple building of the holy mosque, into the very airs of heaven, where at last they might achieve the ultimate bliss, the privilege of kissing the "Kaaba," the stone of Paradise. There were some who sought an even greater happiness at the much-disputed grave of Eve, the first mother. . . . Abdul Hamid learned of all this; and he heard how in the exaltation of the

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

pilgrimage their sense of Moslem unity was aroused and heightened, and with it their devotion to the Khalif in Constantinople, whose noble acts the leaders of the caravans recounted in ever more glowing terms. Their devout fervour was thus transformed into admiration for himself, so that the popular saying, "all the great Sultans are dead," lost its effect, and they believed their present ruler to be greater than all others.

Nevertheless his decision to build a railway to the holy city was undoubtedly due primarily to his intense personal interest in the pilgrimage. By thus assisting countless Mohammedans in the performance of their religious duty did he not display his own piety and atone for his sins? So he pressed on with the work, confining his share in it to the matter of finance, but resolved to raise the necessary capital by every means and to see to it that none save Moslem money and labour was employed. And, in fact, the construction of the railway was carried on with astonishing energy and without any assistance from Europe. But could it be said that the steady lengthening of the track afforded him an increasing assurance that he was indeed the "true Khalif," the unchallengeable leader of Islam? The truth is that not even this offering could bring Abdul Hamid the tranquillity which he sought throughout his life. He had striven to achieve it with arms and with ramparts, by the use of cruelty, by the denial of his own intelligence and by a reckless extravagance which outraged his natural miserliness, but still it eluded him. Like every spiritual value, it was least of all to be bought with money.

No man is free from divided motives, but it is rare for a man's spiritual division to become the major experience and the governing factor in his life. The key to Abdul Hamid's destiny, perhaps the chief source of his strength and certainly the seed of his destruction, lay however in the inward conflict

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

by which he was obsessed. Whereas the destinies of ordinary men are linked by love or rivalry, and these influences determine the course of their lives, Abdul Hamid was for ever solitary, he was joined only with himself. His contemporaries agreed of him, and the view was borne out by his actions, that he was at once bold and timid, shrewdly far-seeing and petty-minded, cruel and yet grateful for a display of friendship. His constant double existence, as the "Shadow of God" and as a human creature, prematurely weakened his body; it made of his entire life an endless conflict, a journey through confusion. It was as though the Higher Power were resolved to punish the man who had dared to assume the attributes of Godhead by inflicting upon him an especial measure of human weakness, thereby revealing that the greatest of earthly despots was even less immune from the most simple terrors, the fear of bodily ills and of the lack of money, than others who, possessing less, had less to lose. God or money . . . the inner conflict dominating his life may be summed up in these two words.

His life's task, as he saw it, was to convince Asia of the worthlessness of European civilization, and to found a new epoch of Eastern independence based upon religion and withdrawal from the material world. But at the same time he was in his private life the slave of money. As the Shadow of God he despised gold, the symbol of materialism; but as a man he worshipped it. This question of money ran like a thread through his whole life—the need of money, shortage of money, means of acquiring it. Although his personal needs were exceptionally modest, few rulers can have devoted more time and intelligence to questions of finance. But the demand constantly outstripped the supply. No vice or princely extravagance, no lover's or gambler's passion, could have inspired such a craving for money as did Abdul Hamid's constant terror for his life and his throne.

The protective service organized for his personal security

had many ramifications. It grew with every year, swallowing up millions for the payment of spies alone. Further millions were spent in bribes to the foreign Press. Thousands of individuals in Constantinople lived very comfortably as "pensioners," drawing their incomes not as a reward for past services but as bribes to forestall subversive activities. Titles with accompanying emoluments were scattered broadcast, and the number of the Albanian and Arabian guards was raised to twenty thousand. On the other hand, purveyors of goods to the Residence were compelled to accept moderate prices and to give long credit, and the Sultan wore his dingy black coats until they were in the last stages of shabbiness. When his daughter was married gilt copper coins were strewn among the populace instead of the traditional pieces of gold. The words, "The Monarch must be richer than anyone else," were frequently on his lips and always in his thoughts. He had observed the struggle in Europe between the crowned heads and the aristocracy on the one hand, and the rising, wealthy bourgeoisie on the other, and he was resolved that in his own realm he alone should control the power of capital.

His sources of wealth were very great. His yearly income comprised the eighteen million francs of his civil list and the proceeds of estates and mines estimated at a further fifteen million, but whose real value could not be assessed. He had no desire that the precise extent of his possessions should be known, and it is probable that he himself had only an approximate idea of their worth. All such calculations in Turkey were "approximate." He owned thousands of villages; he took possession of ownerless land and of the lands of religious orders, and in the name of religion he ordered confiscations, compelling Christian landowners to surrender their property in exchange for nominal sums. But still his income did not suffice to dispel the mists of fear. The demands of his spies grew more exorbitant as the reports of conspiracies which they

dutifully submitted to Yildiz grew more fantastic. Sacks filled with these documents were delivered every day.

The financial problem was particularly acute at the beginning of the new century. The pan-Islam movement had resulted in a slowing-up of industry throughout the Asiatic provinces. The planting of mulberries, the cultivation of cotton and the running of agricultural schools all were neglected while men's eyes were turned to the dawn of spiritual salvation, and fewer taxes were paid in consequence to their earthly rulers. At the same time the dispatch of agents of the movement and the subsidising of sheiks and tribal rulers called for a constant supply of money. The preachers of Islam were not greedy, but their number, the extent of the empire and still more the wide distribution of Moslem communities in other countries, caused the multiplication of small sums to reach a formidable figure.

Nowhere was the movement so costly as in the European provinces. Agents had at first been sent only eastward, but as their success became known (Abdul Hamid already referred to himself as the "Bismarck of Asia") they were no longer restricted to the western Asiatic boundaries. They penetrated into the Balkans, into the mountain fastnesses of Albania and Macedonia, carrying small knives concealed in their flowing priestly garments with which to bestow upon new converts the distinguishing mark of circumcision. Both for Christian and Jew in the Balkans were there sound inducements to embrace the creed of Islam: the larger land holdings might only be acquired by Mohammedans, and it was becoming increasingly rare for official posts to be conferred upon the members of a "foreign" faith. This growing intolerance of other religions was the reverse side of the Islamic revival. Despite many formal conversions the revolt in European Turkey against the despotic methods of Constantinople became steadily more perceptible.

Unrest was nowhere greater than in Macedonia. The little

frontier province became a witches' cauldron of passion and violence. Its Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian inhabitants, quarrelling continuously among themselves, were at one in their hostility to the Sultan, while in the Macedonian prisons mortal enemies became allies. Revolt against the Turkish authority was fostered in the *Comités* whose form was derived from the *Carbonari* organization which paved the way for the freedom and unification of Italy. But it was the Sultan himself who saw to it that the disorders in Macedonia were not permitted to subside. The Albanians, the most trustworthy of the Balkan Moslems, endowed with an insatiable love of combat, were ordered systematically to provoke the hostility of the Christians. For the presence of the Christians now afforded the Sultan a peculiar safeguard: they could be described as "revolutionaries" and used to frighten Europe, which after a revolutionary and liberal epoch was entering upon a phase of imperialism and the large-scale capitalist drive for power. Faced by this "revolutionary" bogey the European ruling classes were impelled to accept the Sultan as an ally.

Other disturbing elements penetrated into the Balkans from Europe itself: they came from Russia in the form of priests, and from Austria, whose Government, having achieved control of Bosnia and Herzegovina, now sought to extend its influence as far as the Ægean Sea. The unrest thus deriving from so many sources became in 1902 an open conflagration. Tens of thousands of Macedonians took up arms. The event was a shock to its instigators, who had desired only so much disturbance in the Balkans as would keep their opponents in a state of disquiet, and who were taken wholly by surprise by the crude nature of the outbreak. The European Governments approached the Turkish Government with the request that order should be restored, for chaos on the fringe of Europe was a dangerous object-lesson for the smaller nationalities agitating in the Western parliaments for freedom and inde-

pendence. The Sultan accordingly sent troops. At this stage the revolt meant little more to him than an added expense. The punitive expedition cost money. Moreover, the unrest tended to spread from the Balkans, even reaching as far as the capital itself. He found it necessary again to add to the number of his spies and guards, and to increase the "rewards of fidelity," so that once more the terrors might be stilled which had already cost him so much.

In January 1902 he made a surprise move. He at last granted the German application for a concession to build a railway diagonally across Turkey to the Persian Gulf, a continuation of the Anatolian railway, which went as far as Ankara. Thus the long-delayed plan was suddenly and unexpectedly put into execution. What had happened? Did he feel himself so fortified by the success of the pan-Islam movement in the Asiatic provinces that he need no longer resist the encroachment of Western influence, of which the railway must be a powerful adjunct? Did he believe that the empire was spiritually so secure that it could now afford to profit in an Eastern manner by the achievements of the West? It was only a short time since, in contravention of all treaty rights, he had caused European mail-bags to be confiscated, describing the European postal services as "channels of evil." This had happened in 1901.

The truth is that the granting of the concession represented, not the fulfilment of a considered plan but the inward, personal defeat of Abdul Hamid himself. The semi-divine ruler had surrendered to the human creature fearing death. He granted the concession simply in order to gain a rich new source of revenue, and probably did so in one of those moments of panic when he was overwhelmed by terror of the assassin and fear of the lack of means to keep his enemies at bay.

Contrary to the advice of his ministers he decided that it

should go to Germany. It would be more exact to say that he decided against England. He had never become reconciled to the loss of Egypt, nor, on the other hand, had he forgotten the amiability of the German Emperor during his visit. Thus the intimate reactions of a single man determined the nature of an event of the most far-reaching international significance.

The Turkish-German railway agreement represented a victory for Germany corresponding to the outcome of a successful war, for not only the European Powers but even America had been interested in the project. Nor could it fail to have a profound effect upon future developments in world affairs. Indeed, this signing of a prosaic commercial treaty, expressive of the ruling passion of an epoch, struck an ominous note at the opening of the twentieth century. The most far-reaching conflicts in the nineteenth century had arisen from the struggle among the nations to acquire the best and cheapest transport routes. The British acquisition of the Suez Canal had been followed by a lengthy period of tension between England and France, and the first consequence for Russia of the trans-Siberian railway had been war and defeat at the hands of Japan. In the same way the Bagdad railway, as it came to be called, was later linked with the war of 1914.

For Turkey, however, it represented a new source of strength, internally and externally, in the East and in the West. It promised to afford a stiffening of the central authority against the hostile rule of the nomad chiefs in the provinces, and it would also be a means whereby the immense untapped Turkish reserves of wealth and man-power might for the first time be brought to bear for peace or war against the rest of the world. It seemed to portend a revolution in commerce such as had been brought about at the close of the fifteenth century by the discovery of America. Would Turkey resume her traditional role as the channel of world trade between East and West, and thus achieve the status of a Great Power?

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

But the world's attention was directed less to Turkey than to Germany. It was prophesied that German exports to the East would reach an annual value of £16,000,000. The prophets did not venture to estimate the number of troops which the railway might rapidly convey to the fringe of Europe for the service of Germany, nor did they foretell whether these would be used against Russia or against England. For two hundred and fifty years Romans and Parthians had striven for the possession of Mesopotamia, and their rivalry had been succeeded by that of Byzance and Persia: were Germany and England to be their latest successors?

No sooner was the treaty signed than loud objections were raised abroad. Russia was not disposed to permit the construction of a Turkish railway too near the Russo-Turkish frontier, and she advised France to invest capital in the project in order to restrict German influence. England saw herself deprived of a spiritual heritage, since the idea of a railway diagonally across Turkey had first been conceived by the English engineer, Chesney, while he was engaged in archaeological researches in the East during the first half of the nineteenth century. Disraeli and Gladstone, despite their many differences, had agreed in condemning the plan on the score of its excessive cost, and later English interest had been diverted to the Suez Canal. Shortly before the turn of the century, however, an international financier, Rechnitzer, had described its advantages in such glowing terms that by 1899 there was a definite disposition in England to consider it seriously. But once again the interest flagged as England became wholly preoccupied with the Boer War.

The construction of the railway, so fraught with consequences for Abdul Hamid and the world, was begun, while at the same time the agents of pan-Islam swarmed throughout the land. Occasionally these exponents of Oriental mysticism and other-worldliness encountered the German engineers and

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

traders who came as the apostles of progress and materialism. No one could say where this strange rivalry would end.

Nor is it clear whether Abdul Hamid himself understood the full significance of the railway, which of necessity endangered the Moslem revival upon which his heart was set. It was a source of revenue, a matter affecting his security, and for him this was paramount. The proceeds to be derived from it were, however, not easy to calculate. There must certainly be a large preliminary outlay, and those who dwelt near the projected track were faced by long years of heavy taxation. No one, indeed, would derive any immediate benefit except the Sultan himself, whose large holdings of land in the neighbourhood of the line gained enormously in value, and who further profited by credits placed at his disposal in German banks by the Emperor. Nothing is more revealing of Abdul Hamid's character than his intense satisfaction at the possession of foreign securities. During the months following the granting of the concession, with the first considerable profits already in hand, he appeared to enjoy a more tranquil mind.

And in 1904 another event occurred to add to his tranquillity. Murad died, the mentally deranged brother who for twenty-eight years had been his prisoner, and the most ominous of the shadows which encompassed him. Not until his death did Abdul Hamid become the unchallengeable occupant of the Turkish throne, no longer a "deputy" and a "usurper"! For a while it seemed as though, with his old age approaching, a more settled day was to dawn for him, and with it a period of less uncertainty for Turkey. On the occasion of an earthquake in Constantinople which occurred at the very hour of the annual ceremonial reception at Dolmabagdshe (one of the two occasions in the year when he left the Residence and admitted the world at large to his presence) he was one of the few people who kept their heads. Ministers and pashas jumped through windows, floors cracked, chandeliers came tumbling

down, and amid this terror and confusion the fragile figure of the master of Turkey remained erect in the heaving room. But soon afterwards he showed himself to be still as terrified as a child at the least unexpected sound. He made use of the resemblance borne him by his foster-brother, Izzet, to forgo the weekly visit to the mosque. Izzet, wearing his clothes and his imperial manner, made the brief journey in his stead. Yildiz watched in silence as he continued to wrestle with the forces of his own unreason, demonstrating his mastery with revolver and rifle by hitting oranges tossed in the air and shooting his initials on distant targets, passing his nights in sleeplessness, alert at every moment for a catastrophe. The use of cosmetics to give him the appearance of eternal youth became steadily less successful. These laborious efforts at rejuvenation only laid a grotesque emphasis upon the fact that he was prematurely aged.

In April 1903 the Bagdad railway was discussed in the English House of Commons. Mr. Balfour advocated financial co-operation between England and Germany, but Parliament was opposed to this on the grounds that ". . . commercial and political considerations could not be separated." By penetrating into the ancient kingdoms of Babylon and Assyria, Germany threatened to destroy British trade in the Near East and to achieve an unprecedented military position. Lord Curzon, however, was inclined to attach little importance to the military threat, since the Mesopotamian deserts were not suitable for the deployment of large bodies of troops; and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain saw better commercial chances in Rhodes' plan for Africa than in Asia. Many doubts were expressed as to whether any single Power would be able to carry out the feat of building the railway, which would be approximately 1,700 miles long, with innumerable tunnels and bridges. The means to complete the gigantic task were still lacking; but

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

with the fall of the Balfour Cabinet the idea of international co-operation was finally abandoned.

In 1904 the Entente Cordiale between England and France came into being. European disunity, which for decades had been a source of strength to Turkey, was thus lessened by the coming together of two ancient antagonists. And while the Japanese envoys sent by the Mikado in 1899 to propose an Asiatic union still remained in Constantinople, England had signed a treaty of alliance with Japan in 1901. Following a meeting of the Russian and Austrian monarchs at Muerzsteg in 1903, renewed and more urgent demands were made for the institution of reforms in Macedonia under European auspices. In 1904 the Sultan agreed to the appointment of European financial supervisors, and in 1906 he admitted European officers to the *gendarmerie*, although he had previously refused to countenance any European interference in Turkish internal affairs.

Was he once again moving towards the long-considered plan of confining Turkey to Asia and withdrawing from Europe altogether? Was his policy dictated by the German Field-Marshal von der Goltz? Or was he waiting until the pan-Islam movement had made such strides that, assured of his position in Asia, he could afford to defy Europe?

For the present his eyes were turned to the East. But his interest was not confined to spiritual matters or to questions of pan-Islamic policy. A new factor had arisen to engage his attention. It was oil.

The development of the internal combustion engine by Benz and Daimler had brought petroleum into the sphere of everyday utilities. A cry for oil echoed round the world, and wherever a trace was to be found the agents of international capital gathered together. Abdul Hamid had first heard of the possibilities of oil at the Paris World Exhibition. Subsequently reports on American oil wells and oil magnates had reached him, and he had heard of oil in his own province of Meso-

potamia. Specimens of this had been sent to London for analysis, and machinery had even been brought from Europe to Mendeli, one of the Mesopotamian oil districts. But the costly and complex apparatus had been allowed to rust while the inhabitants continued to procure oil with dried pumpkin-rinds. They had little use for the vast quantities available except as an ointment and a bath for the sick. Nor was it only lack of transport which had hindered the development of the wells: in the eyes of the local population they had a religious significance. Naked Arabs danced at night around the flames of burning pitch. These flames had burned for thousands of years as symbols of the forces of light. Strabo speaks of a temple at Kerkuk, not far from Bagdad, where a perpetual fire rose from the earth, a flaming testimony to the gods. Plutarch wrote that Babylon was "filled with subterranean fires." From time immemorial legend had fed upon the wells. There are passages in the Bible which, viewed scientifically, may be related to oil. The rain of ashes which fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah was probably asphalt, a chilled by-product of petroleum; and Noah may have made his ark seaworthy upon the waters of the Flood (the overflowing of the Tigris) by caulking it with substances derived from oil.

These romantic echoes, however, were not alone in stimulating the enterprise of modern capitalists, the less so since the first reports of the specialists invited by Abdul Hamid to inspect the oil-fields were as exaggerated as the legends. There were tales of limitless wealth, whole seas of oil, and on the other hand there were warnings no less excessive in their underestimate of the real potentialities.

A seemingly remote event had brought the wells within the sphere of practical politics. Among the bearers of threats and protests from the West during the period of the Armenian massacres was an American, Admiral Chester. He appeared in Turkey in humanitarian-martial-juridical guise to demand

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

compensation for the "American Armenians" (Armenians who had studied or worked in America and had acquired American nationality, to which they looked for protection in their Turkish homeland), but his manner presently became thoughtful, inquisitive and conciliatory. References to "the rediscovery of Paradise in Mesopotamia" crept into the utterances of one who had arrived as the apostle of justice and humanity.

Admiral Chester attracted Abdul Hamid's notice not only as a new instance of the hypocrisy of the "yellow ones," who sought to do business under a guise of philanthropy, but more especially because he was an American. America was far distant. She would be less likely to interfere in Turkish concerns than the European nations. She might even become the ally of Asia against Europe. Nevertheless he did not yield to his first impulse towards the American: following his usual custom he delayed, keeping Chester at his disposal as well as the Australian, D'Arcy, and others who were in quest of oil concessions. In the end it was Germany, through the Deutsche Bank, who received permission to prospect over an area extending for twenty kilometres on either side of the Bagdad railway track. "From the Wilhelmstrasse to Mosul" became a new slogan of international politics, a cry at once of encouragement and of warning. The railway invested the oil-wells with an entirely new significance: it brought them within reach of Western harbours and world trade. The first prospecting undertaken by the Germans, however, brought no result; but Abdul Hamid continued to be dazzled by the picture of limitless wealth which would furnish an unassailable bulwark against all the evils of this earth.

This hope of immense profits to be derived from the oil-fields (in 1904 those in the Mosul area were added to his civil list) so caused his terrors to abate that it diminished the importance of other matters in his eyes. In particular it caused him to pay less attention to the events in Macedonia.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### DEFEAT

ON July 22, 1908, Macedonia, so long the scene of political strife, witnessed a strange event. The balconies of its Government buildings were transformed into living pictures of peace. Moslem priests, Greek and Bulgarian bishops, Turkish officers, group-leaders of different nationalities who for years had been the most bitter antagonists, now clasped hands in token of the unalterable unity which was henceforth to prevail between Mohammedan and Christian, and between the Orthodox Church and the Church of Rome. Red flags bearing Turkish and Slavonic inscriptions fluttered in the breeze, flaunting before the astonished people the words "liberty—equality—fraternity." A triumphal chorus in all the countless tongues and dialects of the Balkans bore the words aloft. The long-prevailing spirit of conflict, now violent, now furtive, had given way to a spirit of feasting, and as though it were a recognized feast-day the shops were closed. Only the post offices worked overtime. Ceaselessly the little hammers of the telegraph ticked out to every corner of the empire the words "unity and progress."

"The Committee for Union and Progress" was the designation of a secret organization of the Young Turks which had been in existence for some years and had held a general session in Paris (at the palace of the Comte de Pourtales) in the year 1902. A literary and idealist movement born of despair at the

ruthless persecution under Abdul Hamid, and inspired by the spirit of the French Revolution and the doctrines of Voltaire and Rousseau, was converted in Macedonia into a political fact. The Moslems were in a minority in the Balkans. They had suffered the hatred and contempt of the Christians (a subject-race in Turkey proper), and the humiliation had filled them with resentment against the Turkish Government and the Sultan. The leaders of the Macedonian Committee for Union and Progress were officers of the Third Army Corps sent to suppress the Greek and Slav rebels. These upholders of the Turkish authority had themselves become rebels. They demanded by telegraph that the Sultan should agree to the establishment of a Constitutional Government.

Abdul Hamid's policy was still directed Eastward, but he had never brought himself to the point of renouncing the small remaining portions of his European domain. Europe now had her revenge. The revolt against the Sultan which was to become known to history as the Young Turk rebellion began in Macedonia; and, ironically, it was not the work of Europeans but of a group of his own people, who rose against him precisely because he had made too many concessions to Europe.

The immediate cause of the revolt was the Sultan's acceptance of the Anglo-Russian demand that Europeans should be placed at the head of the Macedonian Law Courts. During a meeting at Reval, on June 10, 1908, King Edward VII and Czar Nicholas had agreed to insist upon the final execution of the Macedonian reforms—that is to say, the pacification of a revolutionary area on the fringe of Europe. But the Turkish officers in Macedonia were not prepared to tolerate a further increase of European influence. They regarded the presence of European officers and officials as a humiliation, and although they were still ostensibly the masters, they foresaw that if no action were taken, and the Turkish policy of compromise and delay were allowed to continue indefinitely, they

would in the end be completely submerged in the ceaseless activity of the West.

Their cry was, "Turkey for the Turks!" For the first time since the rise of the Ottoman Empire a purely Turkish national feeling found expression. Hitherto the prevailing spirit had been international: it had been that of Islam; and this was the spirit fostered by the latest turn of Abdul Hamid's policy. The word "fatherland" had been expressly forbidden. Only a spiritual fatherland, the land of the after-life, was recognized in the realms of the Shadow of God. But in July 1908 the concept of Turkish nationalism took shape. The spirit of the time proved mightier than tradition or the will of a single man, and the officers of the Third Army Corps were linked with the new trend in European history.

After fluctuating throughout the nineteenth century between the ideals of Liberalism and Nationalism, Europe, actuated by both philosophies, had finally turned towards the latter. The many small but violent national groups in the Balkans were the predecessors of Turkish nationalism. Slavs and Greeks were the mentors of their enemy and one-time conqueror. The Young Turk programme embodied the principle that all the inhabitants of Turkey should enjoy racial and religious equality, thus reconciling Nationalism with Liberalism.

Abdul Hamid was not particularly disturbed by the news that "something was happening in Macedonia." Something was always happening in Macedonia, and one wave of agitation was as a rule swamped by the next. When dispatches arrived foreshadowing the forcible imposition of the Constitution he ordered that Niazi and Enver, the leading spirits in the revolt, should be recalled to Constantinople; and when his august summons was ignored he ordered the dispatch of Asiatic troops to quell the revolt. Consternation only overtook him when he learned that the Anatolian soldiers, "his Asiatics," had refused to fire upon their comrades but had instead re-echoed the cry

*Exclusive News Agency*



ENVER BEY, LEADER OF THE YOUNG  
TURKISH REVOLUTION, 1908-9

*Exclusive News Agency*



NIAZI BEY, ANOTHER LEADER  
OF THE YOUNG TURKS



#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

of "freedom, equality and progress." (Young Turks under various guises had been smuggled aboard the ships to mingle with them during the voyage; by the time they landed in Salonika they had become the allies of the Macedonians.) A State Council was accordingly held at Yildiz on July 23rd. Former Grand Viziers, ministers and generals met under the presidency of the existing Grand Vizier, Ferid Pasha. Following his custom, the custom of Oriental deities, the Sultan was present but invisible. Concealed behind a curtain he noted with approval that not one of the assembled dignitaries so much as uttered the word "constitution." Only one man had the audacity to advise him to accept the Young Turk demands, and this intrepid counsellor, the Court Astrologer, Abdul Huda, could put the responsibility upon heaven.

If Abdul Hamid finally yielded to the advice of his highly regarded medicine-man it was in a spirit of superstition mingled with shrewd calculation. The manner of his acceptance of the Constitution, on July 24th, revealed his gifts as a diplomat and an actor. He declared himself ready to become President of the Committee for Union and Progress, but was content to accept ordinary membership when the Central Macedonian Committee pointed out that all members were equal. He even went out of his way to prove himself the most loyal of its supporters. He thanked his Young Turks for having opened his eyes to the fact that "the time was now ripe," which bad advisers had concealed from him. A red-and-white cockade adorned his black coat; the hitherto despised word, "fatherland," was heard from his lips; and he contributed £500,000 from his private fortune for the use of the Committee, a palace in which to house the forthcoming Parliament, and two hundred magnificent chargers from the Yildiz stables for cavalry officers.

Thus did he succeed in diverting the movement, which in its essence was no less anti-dynastic than nationalist, from its

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

threat to himself. The ardour of the Young Turks was now directed against Europe, against the "Frankish yoke," and against the ministers and pashas whose evil counsels had led the Sultan astray. The Turkish illustrated papers depicted these gentlemen as scorpions, snakes and hyenas preying upon the land, so lost to all sense of decency that they were ready in their lust for profit to export the droppings of dogs (actually a preparation for tanning kid gloves was derived from the faeces of the swarms of jackals). The person of the Sultan, however, remained unassailed, and within a short time he was made the object of loyal demonstrations. Mohammedans from the provinces arrived in Constantinople to assure themselves "that the Khalif had come to no harm during the revolt." Abdul Hamid caused a special train to be run from Adrianople so as to afford as many believers as possible a private view, and he displayed himself at a window of the Residence before a wildly cheering crowd. But these were terrible hours for his panic-ridden soul. With every breath he drew he seemed to be both conquered and conqueror. Old and tired, but still filled with determination, he clung to his supremacy, and so far overcame his terror of the outside world as to attend religious service at one of the public mosques in the town, instead of in the safety of the Hamidie Mosque, near the residence. His carriage had to force its way through endless crowds, thronging the streets not only in honour of the Sultan but also to welcome the political prisoners released from captivity. Men were returning home who had grown grey and blind in the hidden gaols of Tripoli and Rhodes, Erzerum and Sinope; scarcely able to grasp the fact that they were free, they aroused in the people a passionate longing for freedom. One of them, brought home on a gaily be-flagged ship, white-bearded and half-blind, was Furad Pasha, one of the few who had had the courage to protest openly against the Armenian massacres.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Many elements combined to heighten the fever in the capital, where the Committee for Union and Progress assumed control, replacing vizier and ministers, and meeting all opposition with a severity in no degree less than that of its predecessors. By order of these pioneers of the future the hand which stole was hacked off as it has been from times immemorial. Murderers and traitors were publicly hanged. Their lifeless bodies, suspended day after day in the handsome streets and squares, brushed by passers-by in the increasing crowds that thronged the town, were the best witnesses of the new order, whose real objectives were only understood as they became apparent.

As events took shape the position of the Sultan gained in clarity and firmness. Abdul Hamid seemed no longer to concern himself with political details. At the desire of the Committee he dispensed with many of his closest "co-operators," his spies and soothsayers. He refused officially to receive secret reports and became indeed the Shadow of God where earthly matters were concerned. The strength of his position was made manifest in the Young Turk protestations of loyalty to the Mohammedan religion, the backbone of the Eastern tradition. The Young Turks, disciples of Rousseau and Voltaire and of the Encyclopædistes, had discovered that Turkish philosophers had preached the gospel of the rights of man a thousand years before. The Prophet had spoken thus to the followers of other creeds: "Your rights are the same as ours, your duties also." The bitter gibes at the "faithless dogs of Christians" and the "thankless Giaours" were no longer heard. In the Koran it was written: "Every epoch has its Bible. Allah deletes and confirms according to His Will. The holy wisdom of Mohammed is like a measureless sea where men must seek with labour and suffering the pearls which it hides."

The exuberance of freedom so overflowed in the newspapers of Constantinople that a shortage of newsprint ensued and the Turks were compelled to use brown paper for the ex-

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

pression of their rejoicing. At street-corners and on the quays where incoming vessels tied up, postcards were offered bearing inscriptions in many languages together with symbolical portrayals of freedom, not always in the best of taste. (Not uncommonly they took the form of the Sultan, upon whose melancholy brow an angel impressed a kiss by which not only he but all Turkey was awakened.) On all sides, on the walls of houses, in shops, in the hands of street-hawkers, were the portraits of the two officers, Niazi and Enver, hitherto obscure soldiers of the Macedonian frontier-garrison but now known as the men who had "freed Turkey from the Frankish yoke."

The readiness of the Young Turks to fraternize with the followers of other creeds gradually developed into a tendency to deny differences of class. "All men are equal upon earth," they declared. "The pashas and beys do not come from heaven; they are of the same stuff as ourselves. Why then should millions suffer for the good of a few hundreds?" The preachers of social revolution went from village to village appealing to the workers. "Brothers, for centuries you have been consigned to darkness and ignorance. Those who lived by your blood and sweat did not desire to allow you to acquire knowledge, knowing that the workers, once conscious of their situation, would soon put an end to the idlers. Incapable of any useful activity, they passed their days in gluttony and debauchery. The pashas and beys took every care to prevent the light from reaching you. Workers, you must learn that the slave can break his shameful bondage, but the slavish spirit remains for ever a slave!"

The greatest of the Sultan's trials was the opening of Parliament on December 17, 1908. On this first great day of "freedom" the streets of Constantinople festively awaited the appearance of the master, but Abdul Hamid, announcing that he was indisposed, did not appear. When the hour fixed for the ceremony was already past he informed a small circle of

his intimates that "he had received a secret report of a plot against his life." And then he resolved to go after all.

He arrived late at his box in the Parliament building, a bevy of dignitaries surrounding his slight figure in the customary grey military cloak. Epaulettes exaggerated in size seemed to weigh him down; the immense fez, enhancing his unprepossessing appearance, was perched grotesquely on the side of his head; his feet shuffled over the floor. He achieved a certain dignity as he gazed with a cold severity over that picturesque gathering in which were mingled the representatives of different provinces, races, tongues, creeds, worlds and epochs. There were young men among them who made it a point of pride to appear as soberly attired as the merchants of the West, and who wore the fez as though it were a part of a masquerade. The few military uniforms were overshadowed by the representatives of religion (there were forty priests among the deputies), the emerald-green robes, the immense white turbans, the splendid attire of the Greek and Armenian patriarchs, the Jewish rabbis and the Catholic priests. How bright and various was Turkey by comparison with the uniformity of the Western peoples when their parliaments were born! How remote from one another were the different groups of men who now for the first time called each other "brother"! Most of the deputies were having their first glimpse of their ruler—the Shadow of God for many, but for others an apocalyptic monster.

The Sultan preserved a rigid attitude, his big eyes ceaselessly roving, while his secretary, Ali Gewad, read his inaugural address. It was an implied apology for the fact that the introduction of the Constitution had been so long delayed. "I have striven to further the cause of progress in my realm. I thank God that my object has been achieved, and that owing to universal education there is a growth of culture in every class. . . ." The firing of a hundred and one guns saluted the close of the shadowy discourse. The deputies took the oath of

fidelity to the new Constitution, and then the deputy for Mecca, the representative of the holy places, intoned a prayer. The mournful chant caused the features of Abdul Hamid to relax. The pale old man with a childlike gesture reached out his hands, the palms turned upwards, to "catch" God's blessing. Many of those assembled followed his example. With open hands the deputies of the Young Turk Parliament besought the Grace of God. Hitherto the Turks had entrusted their fate without reserve to the wisdom of heaven, humbly accepting whatever might befall them, of good and still more of evil, as the working of a pre-ordained destiny. Now, however, since they were resolved to shape their own lives in the light of human reason and conscience, they fortified themselves in their presumption with the text of the Koran which ran: "You must take counsel together for the ordering of your common affairs. . . ."

The ceremonial opening of Parliament was followed by a reception for the deputies at Yildiz. A rich feast and a remarkably amiable host awaited the guests. The Sultan was anxious to learn whether they were content with the palace which he had presented to the Committee for its use: was it sufficiently comfortable, or would they prefer something better? He insisted upon installing a lift at his own expense. He invited the President of the Chamber, Riza Bey, to taste his private drinking-water, derived from a special spring. He ardently proclaimed his satisfaction with the Constitution, and he embraced the deputies as they departed, calling them his children. As they kissed his hands he declared in a voice stifled with emotion that this was the happiest moment of his life. . . .

Thus the new régime came into being; and when, on January 12, 1909, the Grand Vizier, Kiamil Pasha, announced that the European Powers were withdrawing their officers from Macedonia, a tumult of joy swept over Constantinople. This

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

triumph dispelled for a time the tendency to disunion in the new party which had developed alarmingly as a result of early failures. For the Young Turks had already been shaken by two reverses. In the previous October, scarcely three months after they came into power, the province of Bulgaria had proclaimed itself an independent kingdom, and Austria had announced the permanency of her occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, originally undertaken for the restoration of order after the Congress of Berlin. The Sultan thanked the Grand Vizier for his service to the Fatherland. But whether this first success for the Young Turks would pave the way to a better future remained to be seen.

On April 7, 1909, the editor of the newspaper *Serbestja* was shot on the Galata Bridge in Constantinople. The murderer wore officer's uniform, that of the Young Turks. He escaped, and the Sultan personally gave orders that he was to be pursued with the utmost rigour. Conflicting rumours circulated regarding the motive for the crime. Had it been an act of personal revenge, a *crime passionel* or a political murder?

Shortly before his death the murdered journalist had published, in addition to the normal political articles—which, as a matter of course, praised the Young Turk régime—a short note foreshadowing the introduction of a highly important change in the life of Turkey: in future the Turks were to wear European hats. The use of a hat was an extremely delicate affair for Moslems. The fez was something more than a protection against rain and sun: it was a magnet to attract the blessing of God to the head of the believer. The very mention of such a change wounded the religious sensibilities of the Turkish people. Had the murdered journalist been an opponent of the Committee for Union and Progress? Had he been an agitator? Had he been murdered as a punishment? But the Committee had full power to execute summary judgments of

this sort. Who, then, was the murderer, and why had he found it necessary to hide himself?

The funeral of the victim gave rise to an unexpected demonstration. Choirs of fanatical "Ulema" sang songs of anger in a nasal descant, exercising their customary effect upon the crowds. The attention of the onlookers was, however, diverted from these manifestations by the appearance of street-hawkers who, instead of offering the sweets and coffee which were commonly sold in the streets, pressed printed leaflets into their hands and vanished without awaiting payment. The printed word was still a thing of rarity and importance to the Moslems, whose reading had for so long been confined to the Koran. Laboriously deciphering the mysterious documents they found their contents strange indeed. They were verses lampooning the people's representatives in Parliament, of whom the anonymous writer asserted that they did nothing but fill their pockets and their stomachs.

The mass of the Turkish people had not been greatly moved by the introduction of the forms of Constitutional Government. After centuries of despotic rule they were no politicians. When at the end of the funeral ceremony cries of "Long live the Cheriat!" (Mohammedan religious law) and "Down with the Young Turks!" were raised, a great chorus of voices responded. Tradition had prepared them at any time to echo the call to religion, and in all probability their repetition of the cry against the Young Turks was wholly or largely mechanical. However, when a chorus of many hundred voices raised the cry of opposition, many of them remembered their dislike of the revolutionaries and repeated it.

On the morning of April 13th Constantinople was aroused by the sound of drums and shooting. People bold enough to leave their houses found the principal streets, the spaces surrounding the Sophia Mosque and the bridges over the Bosphorus, occupied by troops. Normal life had come to a

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

stop, and the shops were shut. Constantinople was in the hands of non-commissioned officers! The officers had fled, except such as had been imprisoned in the barracks or brutally murdered by their men, who appeared suddenly to be inspired by a hatred of their leaders akin to that which they had once felt for the Armenians. For eight months these officers, the creators of the Young Turk revolution, had been the heroes of the nation; now they were themselves the victims of a military revolt. But the soldiers who rose against them were no more than the instruments of a conservative opposition whose leaders remained for the time being hidden in the shadows.

A few months after the July revolution a body had been constituted in Constantinople with the official title of the "Mohammedan Society." Ostensibly an association of devout spirits, it was in fact a centre of counter-revolution. Its membership included persons of every degree, among them a prince, the members of leading families and many poor men disappointed in their hope of rapid prosperity under the Young Turks. No Government whose object was to transform a centuries-old structure could hope to satisfy the simple, politically uneducated populace in the course of a few months. And an entirely new class of unemployed had appeared in the capital, a veritable army of discontent. These were the Sultan's 20,000 spies, dismissed at the Committee's request, together with other denizens of the palace. Moreover the Turkish women, who had at first regarded the Young Turks as allies in their struggle to be free from the tyranny of the Harem, had begun to revile them as the consequence of their emancipation became apparent in the swarms of indecently clad creatures who took to the streets.

The Mohammedan priests were the natural enemies of progress. The Committee had found it necessary to forbid them to enter all barracks, but they could not prevent soldiers from

entering the mosques, or their simple minds from becoming confused with doubts beyond the compass of their intelligence. Was the Young Turk Government after all an enemy of the Prophet? Did any real brotherhood exist between Moslem and Christian? Was Islam in danger? . . . These were questions which aroused the greatest agitation not only in the minds of a discontented minority but in the great mass of the Turkish people.

As this morning of April 13th wore on to midday an excited crowd again swarmed over the big square before the Hagia Sophia. Policemen tore off their new modern helmets and replaced them with the fez. Priests in turbans and richly coloured robes called upon the people to join with the soldiers—"for the defence of ancient tradition and the Faith of Islam against Freemasons, renegades and Jews!"—in fact, against the Young Turks. Troops also appeared which had been on guard at Yildiz. Were they there by the Sultan's orders, to testify to his support of the rank-and-file against the officers, and of the Conservatives against the Liberals? At Yildiz a council of ministers was being held.

The soldiers demanded a change of Cabinet and the return of the former Grand Vizier, Kiamil Pasha. The Sultan agreed to dissolve the Cabinet but appointed as Vizier Tewfik Pasha, hitherto Turkish ambassador in London.

Excitement in the capital grew from hour to hour. The soldiery was in charge. Firing shots into the air—whether festive or threatening no man could say—a party marched in procession to the Parliament building, where only sixty deputies had ventured to assemble, and demanded a Government which would scrupulously observe Mohammedan law. Large issues of policy were confused with petty actions. They sought, for instance, to forbid the institution of girls' schools; they attacked men on the streets wearing European hats or collars, and clipped the hair of unveiled women. Soldiers in

the cafés became the self-appointed judges of citizens who played cards or consumed alcohol, themselves more intoxicated than any in their puritanical religious ecstasy. A ceremonial procession of holy men passed between rows of respectful troops to the grave of Sultan Mahmud. The Sophia Mosque re-echoed with the sound of hymns, and, once aroused, the rough military voices, mingling with the practised voices of the priests, seemed unable to be silent. The whole town rang with the cry, "Long live the *Sheriat* and the *Padishah!* (Holy Law and the Khalif)—death to the Committee!" Amid the tumult of trumpets and rifle-shots the singing voices rose to a howl in which only the initiated might discern the great Mohammedan war-cry with which in the spring of 1453 the Turks had captured Constantinople—"There is no God but God, and Mohammed is His Prophet!" The tumult became a frenzy as in the evening dusk a great black banner was unfurled, the flag of the Mahdi, the liberator, who would lead Turkey to new victories and a new splendour.

The religious fervour in the capital spread out over the provinces. Armenia became once again the scene of humanity destroyed by hatred. The slaughter which took place at Adana in April 1909 far surpassed all earlier massacres. Panic broke out in the Christian quarters of Constantinople, whose residents, already seeing themselves the victims of unrestricted mob-violence, awaited the protection of foreign warships.

On April 16th, three days after the outbreak of the "counter-revolution," the Sultan's weekly religious excursion was made to the Hamidie Mosque. The crowd of spectators, never lacking on a feast-day, offered the master vociferous homage. According to close observers he had the aspect of a living corpse. The gestures of the small, white-gloved hand were even more ineffectual than usual. On the steps of the mosque his youngest son, aged five, awaited him in a marshal's uniform. The boy, too, appeared to be less a creature of flesh and blood than a

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

flamboyantly decorated doll. The entire Selamik resembled a parade of ghosts, as though some ceremony relating to a long-buried past had been resuscitated for the performance of a play.

Thus in eight months Turkey underwent two revolutions. But she had separated herself more widely from the past than outward appearances at first revealed. While on that day of April 16th Abdul Hamid made a last effort to preserve the spirit of tradition, and to maintain the "Vicegerency of God" in an epoch of materialism and nationalism, his country was moving rapidly towards a new future. In Salonika an army was assembling to march on Constantinople. Whether it would march for or *against* the capital was not yet clear.

Colonel Chefket, the commander of the Macedonian garrison, telegraphed on April 16th to Constantinople that he was returning "to restore order in the capital".

Before sending the telegram he appealed to the Young Turk officers in Salonika—among whom were some who had just come from Constantinople, having escaped a humiliating death at the hands of their men—to come out in undisguised opposition to the counter-revolution. European strategists, on first hearing of his proposed march on Constantinople, reckoned that the expedition would take three weeks and did not think highly of its chances. A delay of three weeks would weaken the allegiance of all the possibly favourable elements in the politically ignorant and hesitating populace; it would enable the reactionaries to mobilize Asiatic regiments or nomad tribes against the Macedonians, and it might have the effect of bringing about a decisive orientation of Turkey towards the East, a final turn to tradition and the pan-Islam policy—in other words, a victory for Abdul Hamid over the Young Turks, over Europe and over himself.

But these calculations were completely falsified. Three days after their departure from Salonika the Macedonian regiments

reached the gates of Constantinople, and their numbers had been multiplied during the march. Bulgarians, Serbs, Armenians, Greeks and Jews had joined them, a picturesque mingling of nationalities and creeds unified in the face of the Moslem counter-revolution. The astonishing rapidity of the march was due to something more than Chefket's determination, his exceptional knowledge of the terrain and the high discipline of the troops, acquired from Prussian officers; it must be attributed partly to Oriental psychology and to Chefket's realization of the fact that he could count upon the loyalty of his men only if they were persuaded of his loyalty to the Sultan. The regiments which marched under his command did so to the accompaniment of religious songs, and in the belief that they were fulfilling a high mission. They were on their way to protect the sacred being at Yildiz, who from his seclusion showered forth blessings upon his subjects. Their comrades in Constantinople had (from a laudable desire to limit the reforms proposed by their officers, lest these should prove excessive) created a state of uncertainty in the capital, and it was for them to restore order.

Such were the simple views of the Macedonians, who were sensible of the honour done them as they recovered from the rigour of their march in the trains sent by the Sultan himself (at Chefket's request) to meet them. In San Stefano they found provisions, dispatched from the same source. Was this offering of mutton and goat's-milk cheese to be accepted as evidence that Abdul Hamid had recognized the failure of the counter-revolution, and that, following his general method of disarming the strong with compliance, he was again yielding to the Young Turks? Eye-witnesses from his *entourage* have since stated that during these days his habitual terrors seemed to have vanished; he was perfectly calm and collected, as though he had submitted to the influence of some higher power which was directing his life into new channels.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Even on April 21st, with his army less than thirty miles from Constantinople and a ring of sixty thousand men surrounding the capital, Chefket still cried, "Long live the Sultan!" But on April 23rd he convoked a national assembly at San Stefano, whose first task was to decide upon the Sultan's fate—his deposition, his death or his continuance upon the throne.

Abdul Hamid's participation in the counter-revolution had been proved. It was known that he had been in contact with the Mohammedan Society. His spies had sat in Parliament; they had mingled with the leaders of the Committee, and in the guise of priests had subverted public opinion, stirred the people to fanaticism and intrigued against the Young Turks. Secret reports had been smuggled into Yildiz on scraps of paper concealed in tobacco-pipes, and in the form of words written between the lines of apparently harmless books; and one of his sons and certain of his eunuchs had circulated money among the soldiers. Thus he had worked to undermine the legal Constitution and had provoked a civil war. Despite this, however, only a minority of those gathered at San Stefano were at first in favour of his deposition. Not until a deputation of naval officers arrived to testify their loyalty to the Committee was there a majority against him. In view of the insignificance of the Turkish fleet the importance of this deputation might have been considered less real than symbolical; but the Turks still retained their superstitious regard for portents, and the weight of opinion against the Sultan soon became overwhelming.

On April 23rd Chefket stood at the outskirts of Constantinople, now a leaderless town, torn by the wildest rumours and trembling in the fear of imminent catastrophe. But what sort of catastrophe was it to be? Was the city to become the scene of civil war? Above all, on which side was the Sultan? Only the most simple-minded believed in Chefket's professions of loyalty, which a few days before had prompted him

to "pardon" the counter-revolutionaries. The housewives of Constantinople began to buy up supplies as though in preparation for a siege. Cautious spirits sought to leave the town, but the close military cordon made this almost impossible.

The Turks were famed in history for their mastery of the art of siege-warfare. Byzantium, which for centuries had withstood every Asiatic conqueror, had fallen to them in 1453, and their failure to take Vienna in 1683 had been due only to the unexpected intervention of the Polish King Sobieski. In this year of 1908 they again showed their skill. Chefket was resolved that the capital of his own country should fall without bloodshed, and he came very near to achieving his object. The total number of dead and wounded came to only about three hundred. The barracks outside the town and the leaderless soldiers in the streets surrendered without a struggle to a well-conceived plan of attack. Artillery was needed only against the Taxim Barracks in the centre.

Scarcely had the brief cannonade ceased (the Macedonians had in the meantime occupied all Government buildings and places of importance) than the cafés were crowded with people. Fortified with coffee and cigarettes the Turkish crowds were still onlookers in the face of great events, easily influenced, liable to sudden passions, but without any decided views. Despotism had too long denied them the right to a sense of personal responsibility in political matters. They were not aware of the portentous nature of recent happenings. The majority did not doubt that Abdul Hamid would continue to reign, or that the destiny of Turkey would take its accustomed course in an undefined future.

The Shadow of God, King of Kings, arbiter of earth's destiny, master of two continents and two seas, saw and heard more than all other men or less than all other men, according to his

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

will. In times of peace Abdul Hamid, gazing in panic from the gardens of Yildiz over the placid vista of the Bosphorus, had often conjured up terrifying visions of approaching armies. But when Chefket's guns sounded in the heart of Constantinople, when his capital was besieged by sections of his own army, when civil war rolled up to his very doors, and the threat of judgment, abdication and even death stared him in the face, the reality was too terrible for him to contemplate. He had heard many tales of the dethronement and execution of kings; but now he took refuge as never before in the status of semi-divinity which set him high above the monarchs of the West.

He explained to his terrified secretaries and servants that he himself had summoned his "faithful troops" from Macedonia, and he appeared to accept with complacence the attitude of Chefket, who described himself as a "rescuer." By these means he protected his own life, but above all he averted a heavy blow to the Moslem tradition, which would have been severely weakened if Chefket had openly rebelled against the Khalif.

Complete calm had been restored in Constantinople by the evening of April 24th. Chefket was now absolute master of the city. And the Sultan, as though the course of his life was utterly remote from that of the outside world, and governed by supernatural laws, passed the day of April 25th in his customary fashion, in his bath and at his desk. He caused reports to be read to him which had been received immediately before the outbreak of the counter-revolution, describing in the most hopeful terms the perfect loyalty of the Asiatic provinces. In the evening Yildiz shone as though at a time of feasting in all the brilliance of its six thousand lamps, an oasis of light amid the darkness into which Constantinople had fallen. After the alarms of the past few days the people had retired to their homes and put out the lights. Abdul Hamid was the only one who desired not only light but music, as

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

though, like a condemned man, he desired to taste his fleeting life to the utmost.

On April 26th the doors of the Residence stood open. Secret Yildiz, so long walled-in and unapproachable, had been deserted by its guards. The many thousands of heavily armed Arabian and Albanian troops had vanished, perhaps seduced from their loyalty by the men of the Macedonian regiments or by the adventurous happenings of the past few days, or perhaps simply in flight from this strange phenomenon of Yildiz pursuing its normal life. Many officials and servants, following the guards, had also left the sinking ship. The eunuchs ran whispering through the apartments of the Harem, amid the host of women alternating between hysterical terror of invaders, curiosity and simple indifference, utterly unable in their remoteness from the world to understand what was going on. But even those better informed were perplexed. Chefket, under whose leadership the Committee for Union and Progress had reassumed control, not only in Constantinople but over the provincial authorities throughout the empire, allowed the Sultan to remain undisturbed. As though the new rulers of Turkey had decided that the Residence of the Khalif lay outside their jurisdiction, Yildiz, unguarded and unbarred, continued in its isolation. Did Chefket hope that chance, perhaps in the shape of a stray bullet through an open doorway, would settle the problem of Abdul Hamid without the need for a final decision? But no bullet strayed in the direction of Yildiz. The problem remained. So great was the gulf separating the Shadow of God from ordinary men that the first Macedonian soldiers who entered the Residence did so merely in order to ask for ammunition, and then departed, seemingly incapable of realizing their own power.

On the night of April 27th Abdul Hamid had to do without his accustomed luxury of brilliant illumination. The electricity and gas had been cut off. The water supply also failed, and the

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

pampered women of the Harem were compelled to drink water out of the ditches in the park. Chefket seemed to be trying to destroy the household by blockade. Did the Young Turks intend to force the Sultan to emerge from his seclusion and appear before them as a supplicant?

Abdul Hamid passed the night in wakefulness, as he had passed so many others. He wandered as he had so often done from house to house. Was he no longer afraid of the dark? Every passage and every doorway was familiar to him. He passed some time in a room which had been fitted up as an operating-theatre, and here, amid the tables and the glittering medical equipment, he ate his last meal in Yildiz. A secret drawer contained foreign medical preparations, ordered in a moment of panic at the thought that he might be poisoned by his own apothecaries; and amid the neatly wrapped boxes and bottles was a small untidy packet containing a piece of dry Dutch cheese—this too hidden in fear and later forgotten.

. . . But in those hours of extreme danger the Sultan seemed no longer afraid, nor was his mind confused. The truth confronted him in stark clarity, and no less clear was his instinctive realization that his one remaining chance lay in personally taking the initiative. He should come forth boldly from hiding, put aside the outworn mask of godhead and confront his enemies as a man. But he had no stomach for this direct conflict. Centuries of princely seclusion in a world remote from realities had weakened the Osman blood. His thoughts flew far and wide, embracing the most grandiose plans, but his nerve failed him when he came to envisage the first practical steps. To cross the threshold of the Residence, to enter the rebellious capital, to address the people, to challenge Chefket to declare himself as the enemy of the Khalif—these were actions he could not contemplate.

A brilliant spring day dawned as a reminder that Nature pursued her course regardless of the deeds and purposes of men.

Constantinople had become a vast military camp in which a remarkable discipline prevailed. There had been no robberies or deeds of violence, even in the most unruly hours. Nevertheless people continued to leave the town, perhaps in fear of a further struggle between Young Turks and Conservatives, or even between Chefket and the Sultan. An atmosphere of flight was engendered by the hurrying conveyances piled high with household goods. A number of men were seen in top-hats—apprehensive Turks who hoped to pass as foreign diplomats. Against the drab military background fluttered the emerald-green robes of Mohammedan priests, or of those who wished to pass as priests, enveloping themselves in their terror from head to foot in the sacred colour of the Prophet. But there were some among the soldiers who regarded the ostentatious display as a challenge, and dared to strip the green robes away. When large sums of money were found hidden in the pockets of these “priests” there was loud indignation against the “agents of despotism” who sought to stir up bloody revolution under the cover of religion. In consequence, gallows were erected at either end of the Galata Bridge, and the dangling corpses bore the legend “Betrayeur of Freedom” inscribed upon their breasts. Swarms of priests took to flight, and thirty theologians who were known to have cried “Down with the Committee!” were condemned as an example to eat poisoned bread.

A cry was raised which had never before been heard—“Long live the laws of Islam . . . DEATH TO ABDUL HAMID!” But still the Young Turks did not enter Yildiz.

The Sultan remained in one of his favourite dwelling-houses, the “little Mabein,” a two-storied wooden house whose heavily shuttered windows looked towards the Harem. After his sleepless night he sought repose on a hastily prepared divan in a darkened room. His favourite son, Abdurrachmin, a

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

half-grown youngster, was with him. He had summoned his other sons, but they had left Yildiz. Nothing disturbed the stillness except the noise of the wild beasts in the park.

But at midday on April 27th his secretary, Djevad, announced that a deputation of four desired to speak to him in the name of the Turkish nation. Even at this moment Djevad, still under the spell of majesty, sought to apologize for the message he had unwillingly borne. He had, however, warned the emissaries of the people that the Sultan always kept a number of loaded revolvers handy.

Abdul Hamid clung to his privilege of inspecting his visitors before allowing himself to be seen. He observed them through an aperture in the partition behind which he was seated. Then he advanced to meet them, and inquired in the lofty accents of a being exalted high above mundane affairs: "What do you want? What has happened?"

After a ceremonious greeting he was replied to by General Essad, a robust man in early middle-age, with more of the Slav and Teuton than of the Oriental in his appearance. The fateful words hung in the still air. "We have come to inform you that the nation has removed you from the throne." In order to maintain an appearance of legality the National Assembly had submitted the question of dethronement to the Sheik ul Islam as the final arbiter, and he, surrounded by bayonets, had given judgment against the Sultan. The nature of the deputation, however, betrayed a certain uneasiness on the part of the Young Turks: the deputies were not pure Turks, but Turkish citizens of Armenian, Greek and Jewish descent.

A convulsion passed through Abdul Hamid. He was silent; and then—as his uncle, Aziz, had done before him—he softly spoke the word that falls from the lips of every Mohammedan, the least as well as the greatest, in moments of extreme tribulation; the word that guards against the last despair—"Kismet! —Fate has willed it!"

The sobbing of his son was heard. "And my life, and the lives of my family?" the Sultan asked.

"The Turkish people are noble and magnanimous," said General Essad. "You have the right to put your trust in them."

All further answer was refused. The deputation had been enjoined by the National Assembly to treat the deposed monarch, whose diplomatic wiles were still feared, with the greatest reserve. Even men who were not of the Mohammedan faith found themselves over-awed in the presence of the man who had until this moment stood so high. None of the four envoys could be unaffected by the moving nature of the scene, or by their late ruler's emotions as at length he confronted the ultimate catastrophe, fear of which had haunted him for thirty-three years. The drama was enacted without flourishes and with few words. It was the aspect of Abdul Hamid alone which made it so painful. The deputation had pictured him differently, the "apocalyptic monster," the "Red Sultan," the terrible Shadow of God. They saw before them a pallid old man whose exhausted strength scarcely sufficed to hold him erect. He wore a shabby old military cloak over a nightgown. With his beard untended and his cheeks untouched by cosmetics he had the appearance of a waxen figure. When they turned to depart they had ceased to fear him.

But as they reached the door, after taking formal leave, Abdul Hamid raised his voice. "May God punish those responsible for this calamity!" The Greek, Karasso, looked up and uttered what was an avowal of faith for the others as well as himself: "God is just, and we may be sure that the guilty will be punished. . . ."

When they were gone the Sultan gave orders for his belongings to be packed. No one dared to question him. Did he intend to leave the country? Would he take them with him? Where would they go, and what were they to pack? He gave no pre-

cise instructions. He himself did not know what the next hours would bring forth, nor had he any idea of what was needed by persons who changed their dwelling. He had never changed his dwelling since the building of Yildiz, never had less than a superfluity of the things he required.

A horde of servants and eunuchs attacked the travelling trunks with which Yildiz was as well equipped as it was with every other article of use, little though they had been needed until that moment. They stowed away everything they could lay hands on, with no semblance of a plan in their minds. The accumulation of unrelated objects was past belief. The tables in the Sultan's apartments were littered with coffee-cups and loaded revolvers, jewelled seals and Japanese fans. There were great piles of newspapers containing articles which had interested him—reports of debates in the English House of Commons, articles on the Bagdad railway. Cigarettes were everywhere, ashtrays, countless medicine-chests, some of which contained rolls of banknotes instead of pills.

Abdul Hamid had locked himself in a small room, and not even Abdurrachmin was allowed to come near him. Was he drawing up the final account with himself, or with the God whose Shadow he still believed himself to be? Did he know that the sound of guns which shattered the silence signalled the proclamation of a new Sultan, his brother, Reshad? "I am the last Sultan" were words he had often repeated. He never ceased to think of himself as the last true embodiment of the tradition of Islam.

At eleven o'clock there was a knocking on his door. Colonel Galio accompanied by a number of officers entered and announced that the carriages were ready. The nation had decided that Salonika should be his place of exile.

Salonika! The bitterness of this surpassed his worst expectations. It was the centre of the Young Turk movement, the hot-bed of rebellion. His plea that he might remain in

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Constantinople, at the Palace of Tsheragan, or else that he might be allowed to go to Europe, was received in icy silence. For a moment it seemed that he might refuse to leave Yildiz, compelling the Young Turks to remove him by force.

The appearance of the officers, with two armoured cars and an escort of troops, had in the meantime robbed the remaining occupants of Yildiz of the last of their self-control. Those who had not already fled came clamouring to the master's side. A mob of gigantic black eunuchs, half-crazed with fear, swarmed about him for protection, and behind them could be heard the sound of women weeping. But even at this hour the women of the Harem had not forgotten the sacred ordinance which forbade them to show their faces to strange men.

Loud cries were heard from the garden. Was there to be a struggle at the very last minute? Young Turk soldiers on guard over the waiting carriages had used their bayonets to investigate certain of the trunks brought out by the servants. Their cries had arisen when a stream of gold coins rolled out. The other trunks were attacked, and gold and jewels purloined. Even the pockets of the servants were searched. But they did not venture to lay hands on the richly bound copies of the Koran which the eunuchs carried suspended from their necks, and thus a quantity of jewels accompanied Abdul Hamid to Salonika.

On the threshold of his home he paused, and a few women pressed closely around him. Did they still seek protection, or was it rather to comfort the white and shaken old man who seemed so very near to collapse? At length the cars set off bearing the dethroned ruler, three of his wives, four concubines and members of his suite, a total of twenty-seven persons. At the Sirkeji station a special train was awaiting them with two magnificent saloon coaches, the Sultan's property for twenty years, but never used until now (their capital value, with interest added, was about three million francs). The women

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

had never seen a train. At first terrified by the snorting of the engine, they soon became intrigued by their new surroundings and were almost cheerful. The Sultan also preserved a calm demeanour, helping them to enter and take their seats; and the hours dragged by until their departure at three in the morning. The Young Turk officers who escorted them did so with extreme politeness, displaying the utmost readiness to comply with their wishes. The truth of Bismarck's reference to the "Turkish gentleman" was manifest in this painful hour when the gaolers bore themselves like a guard of honour. The Orient understands the value of outward forms.

The Mayor of Salonika was waiting on the platform to receive his fallen monarch with befitting ceremony, and after a journey of twenty hours Abdul Hamid was brought by darkness to his place of exile. It was a villa of about thirty rooms situated in a large park, which had been built by the family of the banker, Atalanti, and later had been acquired by the State. Their entry into residence was effected in the same chaotic manner as the departure from Yildiz. The ex-courtiers were quite unconscious of the need for restraint in order to avoid disturbing sleepers at that hour of night. The beds provided did not please the women, who also considered the European bathrooms unhygienic. The escorting officers therefore ordered a furniture-store in the town to open its doors and supply what was wanted. The National Assembly had voted a sum of £1,200 to cover the initial expenses of the exile.

The Sultan, who had eaten nothing during the journey, expressed no wishes, either on the night of his arrival or during the days that immediately followed. During the first days of exile, after the dreadful tension of the last weeks in Yildiz, he seemed more tranquil than in the time of his omnipotence. Like any other retired elderly gentleman he let the hours slip peacefully by while he gossiped with the women, played with the

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

children and sat smoking in the garden. But by the second week his mood had changed. Apathy had given place to agitation. He began to voice requirements—two more black eunuchs, his Angora cat, Zindjab, his white cows, his pedigree fowls, more furniture and above all more light. His interest in the outer world returned. He had the newspapers read to him by his women, and he questioned the servants and his guardian officers—officially described as his suite—concerning events in the town of Salonika and the latest political developments in Constantinople. But his servants and secretaries were no less cut off than himself from contact with the world outside the villa, and the officers were polite but evasive. Abdul Hamid's famous fury broke out, and he constantly accused them of condemning him to a lingering death by fear and boredom.

He passed entire nights at the window, staring in silence towards the sea, beyond which Constantinople lay.

As dusk fell upon the park of Yildiz a chorus of voices mysteriously arose crying, "Long live the Sultan!" The officers engaged in making an inventory of the contents of the Residence, who at the conclusion of their day's work were beginning their evening prayer, wondered in amazement whether these were spirit-voices or whether they were threatened by an onslaught of fanatical counter-revolutionaries. The voices came from the direction of the rooms which they had just left, having sealed them after a careful investigation. The business of making the inventory was trying to the nerves, not only on account of the extraordinary extent of the Residence and the fantastic amount of property it contained, but also because of the constant possibility of unpleasant surprises. It was the last enchanted castle, surrounded by legend no less on account of its rumoured secret passages, trap-doors, oubliettes and automatic guns than for its hidden treasure.

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

But the pæan to the Sultan (in Yildiz the title could refer to no one but Abdul Hamid) turned out to be due to nothing more alarming than a chorus of parrots. They had been trained to cry "Long Live the Sultan" whenever the sun went down and the sound of the evening prayer was heard. Abdul Hamid was an exile, a man buried alive; but the tradition of Islam which he represented, and which it had been his life's work to fortify, still remained. Through all the suffering and misfortune which had befallen Turkey in the past two centuries it had continued to be powerful. The Young Turks were careful to explain that they desired to "conserve" as well as to reform. Such was their theory: it remained to be seen how it would work out in practice, in a land where past and future stood opposed with no bridge between them.

The necessity to dispose of Yildiz was one of the first tasks confronting the new régime. The new Sultan, Reshad—more the shadow of a monarch than the Shadow of God—occupied the Palace of Dolmabagdshe. Yildiz had been exclusively the residence of Abdul Hamid, his own creation, reflecting in its labyrinthine design his strange, tortuous personality. So long as it remained in its original form, a constant reminder to the people of Constantinople, it would be as though Abdul Hamid had not left his capital. There might be even some who would believe that he was still concealed behind its walls.

In order to dispel any such illusion the palace commission ruthlessly began its work with a "living inventory." The entire staff of officials and servants was dismissed. A sad procession streamed out of the Residence to the town. As members of the master's household they had felt themselves to be above the common run of humanity. They could endure the dangers and difficulties which life at Yildiz had entailed, but they were not able to lead the lives of ordinary men. Above all, the eunuchs, for whom no place existed in the new world, were in despair. The unhappy, mutilated creatures drifted back to

their native Nubia, where parents with an eye to financial gain had so barbarously maltreated them.

The Harem presented an especial problem. What was to become of all the women? Only seven had gone with the ex-Sultan to Salonika, and it was possible that two more might follow, but two hundred and thirteen remained. These were at first confined in a special palace, as was customary with the relicts of a Turkish ruler. The younger ones might even hope to make a second marriage, for the recipients of royal favours were much in demand. But the "old Seraglio," whither they were transferred, was as uncomfortable as it was ornate, and it was soon found to be unsuitable as a permanent residence. Accordingly the Young Turks resolved to solve the problem in an unprecedented manner which would be at once progressive, true to the spirit of liberty and economical. The women were asked to give their proper names and their places of origin. For some of the older ones this entailed a difficult feat of memory, for women entering the Harem were considered newly born and were given new names, and some of them had been brought there as young children. Shortly after this they received an order which filled them with dismay. They were conducted into a large room and required to uncover their faces. Weeping, protesting and praying, the sheltered creatures, who had never encountered the gaze of any man other than their master, found themselves under the scrutiny of several hundred men, principally Circassian and Albanian peasants brought to Constantinople to recover the daughters, sisters and nieces whose privilege it had been to become the Sultan's property. The stolid, rough-clad peasants approached the exquisitely adorned and pampered favourites, and touching scenes ensued as relatives long separated found that they could recognize but no longer understand one another, since the Harem women had forgotten their native dialects. By degrees warmth and a new happiness was kindled

in the constrained gathering, until at length there remained only a small group of women whose relatives were not to be found or who could not remember whence they came. In those hours of separation the long and often acrimonious intimacy of the Harem was dissolved in sisterly grief.

Before the palace commission could turn to the inventory of inanimate objects the famous zoo had to be dealt with. It was a collection of rare and beautiful and extraordinary creatures, among them a number of unique products of cross-breeding due to the extreme freedom accorded to the animals. All were now sold, bestowed as gifts or allowed to go free.

No large city store, and still less the household of any other monarch, could produce an array of contents to compare with that of Yildiz. There was an immense cupboard containing nothing but shirts—thousands of them. Nor could these be hurriedly piled up and removed. Each individual shirt had to be searched for the costly objects which were found concealed in some of the garments—strings of pearls whose value ran into tens of thousands of pounds, small bags of precious stones. One drawer contained two hundred medals mixed up with rubies and railway shares, and probably stowed away in this fashion by Abdul Hamid himself. Whole bookcases were filled with five-pound notes. The only objects of any cultural or artistic value were a collection of Roman coins and a few handsomely bound copies of the Koran, but to compensate for this there was an inordinate quantity of cheap Japanese vases. Certain parts of the Residence were more suggestive of an auction-room than of a royal palace or a home that has been lived in. Yildiz, in short, was an immense junk-shop.

In addition to the objects of use which the ex-Sultan had chosen to possess in such fantastic quantities, he had also collected revolvers, keys and bells. Revolvers were found everywhere, even in the bathrooms. But the keys and bells were also weapons of defence. Abdul Hamid had wished not only

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

to be able to lock every door but to have a great number of keys for doing so; and the bells in countless different shapes and designs were a symbol of the unremitting state of alarm which reigned in his soul for thirty-three years.

An uncanny atmosphere still prevailed. Terror, mistrust and superstition lurked in every corner. The "hare's skull," an Eastern talisman against the evil eye, was everywhere to be seen. Numerous bullet-proof garments were found which Abdul Hamid had worn under his clothing (in order to deceive the tailor they were covered with silk and described as "lightning conductors"). Every room contained mirrors so arranged that it was always possible to see what was going on behind one's back. Nothing remained to tell of the fact that people had laughed in Yildiz except a few volumes of humorous Arab fairy-tales, found beside the beds of certain of the guards. Except for the tales of horror which so delighted him, Abdul Hamid himself had read nothing but Turkish history.

But more important to the palace commission than the Harem and the grotesque and tragic contents of the Residence, more important even than the ex-Sultan's "diaries" (the secret reports accumulated during decades, which filled several buildings), was Abdul Hamid's private treasure-store. Two safes were found in a cellar, and eleven sacks of coins; the total value, however, was only half a million Turkish pounds in gold and about two million in precious stones, railway shares and other securities. This did not satisfy the commission. They had also found a notebook giving details of his private income from which it was evident that he had possessed far more. It was not clear whether the anguish and confusion of his departure had caused Abdul Hamid to leave the notebook behind, or whether his doing so was a shrewdly calculated move. In any event, its discovery gave him a new importance in the eyes of the Young Turks. It caused him to remain a factor in Turkish politics. He was known to have had a particular passion

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

for acquiring funds abroad. His deposits in German banks might one day enable him to recover the throne; or they might simply serve to prolong a life which, were it not for these mysterious riches beyond the boundaries of Turkey, might have appeared worthless and burdensome to the new régime, or worthy only of being dispatched by the hand of an assassin.

It was on April 28, 1909, that Abdul Hamid went into exile in Salonika; he died in Constantinople on February 10, 1918. The enfeebled life which had seemed so near to extinction when he left Yildiz, at the age of sixty-seven, endured for another nine years. What gave him the strength to go on living so long? Did he believe that he would one day return to the throne? Throughout his long exile he preserved his customary silence, but there can be little doubt that this hope long lingered in his mind.

When the Government requested him, as a sign of his "trust in the nation," to transfer to them the funds he held abroad, he declared after a brief hesitation that he was prepared to do so. In the middle of July 1909 a military commission from Constantinople arrived in Salonika. Abdul Hamid received them, his enemies and judges, as honoured guests. In the vestibule of the villa seventeen chests had been assembled containing £14,000 in gold, 16,000 shares in the Anatolian railway and other securities. In the presence of representatives of the Deutsche Bank he formally handed these over to the officers, announcing that they comprised his entire fortune. No one doubted, however, that this was no more than a part-offering, probably designed to test the "gratitude" of the Young Turks. Perhaps he also hoped that the gift would bring about a change of heart among the people of Constantinople, evoking an outburst of Moslem enthusiasm for the magnanimous Shadow of God. In any event, the gesture had no sequel.

There were, however, other things besides the hope of reinstatement which helped to prolong Abdul Hamid's life in exile. Being without power, he was less tormented by fear. But above all his spirits were raised by the reverses which the new régime encountered. All his life he had taken pleasure in the weaknesses of others. Nothing gave him greater satisfaction than the errors of the Young Turks.

He no longer had horrific novels and ghost stories read aloud to him: the newspapers gave him excitement enough. From the foreign papers translated for his benefit as well as from the Turkish Press he learned of divisions in the new party. Parliament had split into two factions, Liberal and Conservative, or progressive and reactionary. Young Turks returned from Europe after years of exile were opposed to the military nature of the régime, and officers and civilians were sharply divided. In the end Chefket Pasha refused to allow officers to become members of the Committee for Union and Progress. The banished despot, attentively following the course of events, observed the drift of what had originally been a democratic movement towards absolutism, so that finally the despotism of a single man was replaced by a despotic oligarchy. He watched the efforts of a few tyrants to maintain order in the capital with bayonets and martial law—efforts which failed because the nationalities problem in Turkey appeared to be insoluble. Moslems and Christians, who during the early days of the revolution had embraced one another in the streets, were once again sharply opposed. Characteristic racial differences could no longer be concealed. The Greeks despised the Bulgarians for their brutality, and the Bulgarians described the Greeks as intriguers. Even in the Moslem world itself Turks and Arabs were on unfriendly terms. Each nationality wished to see its past and its language glorified in the school-books, and it was not long before the Moslems, wearied of the endless arguments and quarrels in Parliament, declared that

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

"real equality between Christian and Mohammedan did not exist" and that "peace and happiness are not possible in a country whose people do not wholly submit to its laws."

The translation of revolutionary theory into practice can never be accomplished without the shattering of illusions; and as the illusions of the Young Turks were destroyed so did those of Abdul Hamid increase. He saw that the successes which might have crowned his life—a life which, however open to condemnation, had yet been productive of great undertakings—were threatened with destruction. The revival of Mohammedanism, the alliance with Germany, the exploitation of the Mesopotamian oil-wells—all these projects had been endangered by his banishment. The Young Turks were at first inclined to regard Germany as an unsuitable associate and to turn towards Liberal England (later they abandoned England and turned again to Germany); the construction of the railway to Mecca was discontinued, and completed sections of the line were wrecked by Bedouins; the development of the oil-wells, concerning which a far-reaching agreement with American financiers had been on the verge of signature in April 1909, remained in suspense. But Abdul Hamid was far from despairing as he viewed this interruption of his work. He was convinced that it was only temporary, and that his objectives were and must remain the true objectives of Turkey.

In the year 1912 his hope of returning to Constantinople was fulfilled. The German ship *Lorelei* bore him back to the city of his birth, where the small Beylerbey Palace, originally built for the reception of the Empress Eugénie, was assigned to him as a residence. He remained no less an exile. His return was due to the sad fact that Salonika was in danger of becoming the scene of warfare. The calamity which for thirty-three years he had avoided had come about under the rule of the Young Turks: the Balkan Slavs, abandoning their ancient feuds, had

### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

united in common hostility to Turkey. It was the Balkan War which brought him home.

The Palace of Beylerbey was situated on the shore of the Bosphorus, opposite Yildiz. Abdul Hamid desired to have a back room whose windows commanded nothing but a blank wall. He had no desire to see either Yildiz or the Bosphorus.

He wished to see nothing more of life—still less of a life which included the World War. The conviction that the catastrophe might have been averted if he had remained in power never left him, and it bore heavily upon his last years. After all, he had steered clear of disaster; and were not the deceptions he had practised, balancing his own provinces and the nations of Europe one against the other, raising hopes, directing the interest of the world to new objects when tension threatened to become acute—was not all this better than the holocaust by which Europe and great parts of Asia were now consumed?

Shortly before his deposition he had felt that his plan to restore the power of Turkey by the unification of the Moslem world and the development of the oil-fields was approaching success. The errors and failures of the Young Turks served for a time to raise his spirits, but with the outbreak of the World War he ceased to inveigh against them and expressed only grief that this fate should have befallen his country, and that it had not been granted to him to reign a little longer so that he might have set her feet upon a better road. Thus the old man passed his last lonely years, nursing in a half-darkened room the illusion that he was a saviour of mankind wantonly flung aside. His world was contained within himself, a world of memories and fantasies growing wilder as they became more sundered from reality.

The doctors called to his bedside in February 1918 diagnosed an œdema of the lungs and a general state of weakness. He

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

died, without greatly struggling, in the unalterable conviction that he was the last Shadow of God, the last Turkish Sultan to understand the true destiny of Turkey, which was one with the destiny of Asia and the Moslem peoples.

He did not live to see Turkey's re-birth, following her collapse after the World War, in a manner which betokened the failure of all his plans. With the return of the Khalifat to Arabia and the passing of the oil-wells into the hands of Western finance his two greatest aspirations were realized, but in a sense opposed to everything he had desired, for they brought no benefit to Turkey. Nor could he have been rejoiced by a Turkish revival effected by Western means and based upon frank materialism, upon the acceptance of European standards and the denial of Eastern traditions and the Mohammedan religion. No such fulfilment could have shaken his belief in the paramount importance for Turkey of her ancient spiritual values; it could not have altered his far-reaching views, the worth of which time has still to decide.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### HISTORY OF TURKEY, GENERAL:

- BOEHN, H. O. F. VON: *Blüte und Verfall des Osmanenreichs in Europa*, Berlin, 1854.
- DIEFENBACH, L.: *Die Volksstämme der Europäischen Türkei*, Leipzig, 1877.
- DUCUING, M. F.: *L'exposition universelle de 1867*, Paris, 1867.
- EICHMANN, F.: *Die Reformen des Osmanischen Reiches*, Berlin, 1858.
- ENGELHARDT, A.: *La Turquie et le Tanzimat: Histoire des réformes dans l'Empire Ottoman depuis 1826 jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris, 1882-4.
- GIBBONS, H. A.: *The Foundations of the Ottoman Empire*, Oxford, 1916.
- HAMMER-PURGSTALL, J. VON: *History of the Ottoman Turks*, 1854.
- JASTROW, J.: *Die Weltstellung Konstantinopels in ihrer historischen Entwicklung*, Weimar, 1913.
- JORGA, N.: *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches* (Bd. V. der Staaten-geschichte, herausgeg. v. K. Lamprecht), Gotha, 1913.
- JUCHERAU, DE SAINT-DENYS: *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman depuis 1792 jusque 1844*, Paris, 1844.
- MILLER, W.: *The Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge History Series), 1913.
- MILLINGEN, F.: *La Turquie sous le règne du Sultan Abdul Aziz*, Paris, 1868.
- MOLTKE, H. C. B. VON: *Briefe über Zustände und Begebenheiten in der Türkei*, anonymously published, 1841.
- MORAWITZ, CH.: *Les Finances de la Turquie*, Paris, 1902.
- PEARS, SIR EDWIN: *Turkey and Its People*, London, 1911.
- THORNTON, TH.: *The Present State of Turkey*, London, 1809.
- VAMBERI, H.: *Das Tuerkenvolk in seinen ethnologischen und ethno-graphischen Beziehungen*, Leipzig, 1885.

ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

SULTAN ABDUL HAMID'S LIFE AND REIGN:

- BERARD, V.: *La Politique du Sultan*, Paris, 1897.
- BERARD, V.: *Le Sultan, l'Islam et Les Puissances*, Paris, 1907.
- BRESNITZ VON SYDAKOFF: *Aus dem Reiche Abdul Hamids*, Leipzig, 1903.
- DENAIS, J.: *Le Sultan Abdul Hamid II*, Paris, 1897.
- DJEMALEDDIN BEY: *Sultan Morad V*, London, 1895.
- DORYS, G.: *Abdul Hamid intime*, Paris, 1901.
- FUA, A.: *Abdul Hamid I et Mourad V*, Paris, 1909.
- FESCH, P.: *Constantinople aux derniers jours d'Abdul Hamid*, Paris, 1907.
- HECQUARD, CHARLES: *La Turquie sous Abdul Hamid*, Bruxelles, 1900.
- HIDAYETTE: *Abdul Hamid revolutionnaire*, Zurich, 1896.
- KUENTZER, K.: *Abdul Hamid II und die Reformen in der Türkei*, Dresden, 1897.
- MACCULLAGH, F.: *The Fall of Abdul Hamid*, London, 1910.
- MIDHAT, ALI HAYDAR: *The Life of Midhat Pasha*, London, 1903.
- MOURAD BEY: *Le Palais de Yildis et la Sublime Porte*, Paris, 1895.
- PEARS, SIR EDWIN: *Life of Abdul Hamid*, London, 1917.
- RASCHDAU, L.: *Ein sinkendes Reich (Erlebnisse eines Diplomaten im Orient, 1877-79)*.
- REGLA, P. DE: *Au Pays de l'Espionage*, Paris, 1902.
- ROY, G.: *Abdul Hamid: Le Sultan Rouge*, Paris, 1936.
- STERN, B.: *Abdul Hamid*, Budapest, 1901.
- Abdul Hamid, seine Familie und sein Hofstaat*, Budapest, 1901.
- Der Sultan und seine Politik*, Leipzig, 1906.
- Yunguerken und Verschwoerer*, Leipzig, 1901.
- UHLAR, A., UND INSABATO, E.: *Der erlöschende Halbmond*, Frankfurt, 1909.
- ALI VAHBI BEY: *Pensées et souvenirs de l'Ex-Sultan Abdul Hamid*, Paris, 1914.

THE EASTERN QUESTION; TURKEY AND THE EUROPEAN POWERS:

- ARGYLL, DUKE OF: *Our Responsibilities for Turkey. Facts and Memories of 40 years*. 1896.
- BAMBERG, F.: *Geschichte der orientalischen Angelegenheit im Zeitraum des Pariser und Berliner Friedens, 1856 und 1878*, Berlin, 1888-92.

#### ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

- BOURDARIE, P.: *Fachoda, La Mission Marchand, la question d'Egypt*, Paris, 1899.
- BRESNITZ VON SYDAKOFF, PH. F.: *Abdul Hamid und die Christenverfolgungen in der Turkei*, Berlin, 1896.
- BRUNSWICK, B.: *Le Traité de Berlin*, Paris, 1878.
- CHOUBLIER, M.: *La Question d'Orient depuis le traité de Berlin*, Paris, 1899.
- DIPLOMATE, ANCIEN: *Etudes diplomatiques sur la guerre de Crimée*, 1878.
- DRIAUT, R. ED.: *La question d'Orient depuis ses origines jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris, 1898.
- GENTZ, FR. VON: *Zur Geschichte der Orientalischen Frage* (Briefe aus dem Nachlass, hgg. von Prokesch-Osten), Wien, 1807.
- GLADSTONE, W. E.: *Lessons in Massacre. Conduct of the Turkish Government in Bulgaria*, London, 1877.
- MANDELSTAMM, A.: *Le sort de l'Empire Ottoman*, Lausanne, 1917.
- MOURIEZ, P.: *Des intérêts Européens en Orient*, Paris, 1852.
- NINET, J.: *Moscou versus Istanbul*, Berne, 1868.
- NICOLSON, H. J.: *Sir Arthur Nicolson, first Lord Carnock*, London, 1930.
- OESTERREICHISCHES ROTBUCH: *Aktenstücke und Korrespondenzen des k. und k. Ministeriums d. Aussern v. November 1866 bis September 1878*.
- PINON, R.: *L'Europe et l'Empire Ottoman*, Paris, 1908.
- PINON, R.: *L'Europe et la Jeune Turquie. Les aspects nouveaux de la question d'Orient*, Paris, 1911.
- ROUSSET, C.: *Histoire de la guerre de Crimée*, Paris, 1878.
- SAX, C. VON: *Geschichte des Machterfalls der Turkei und die Phasen der Orientalischen Frage*, Wien, 1913.
- SCHUECKING, A.: *Turkische Erlebnisse*, 1879.
- SERAIL UND HOHE PFORTE (anonym nach Dokumenten), Wien, 1879.
- TOYNBEE, A. I.: *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey*, London, 1922.
- VAMBERI, H.: *Westlicher Kultureinfluss im Osten*, Berlin, 1906.

#### BAGDAD RAILWAY AND OIL-FIELDS:

- DENNY, L.: *We Fight for Oil*, New York, 1928.
- EARLE, E. M.: *Turkey, the Great Powers and the Bagdad Railway*, London, 1923.

ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

- GROTHE, H.: *Auf tuerkischer Erde*, Berlin, 1903.  
*Die Bagdadbahn und das Schwaebische Bauernelement*, Berlin, 1902.
- HAKKI BEY: *De Stamboul a Bagdad*, Paris, 1911.
- HESSE, F.: *Die Mossulfrage*, Berlin, 1925.
- MANNSELLI, F. R.: *Mesopotamian Petroleum* (*Geographical Journal*, 1897).
- MEISSNER: *Die Naphthaquellen bei Mendeli* (Petermanns Mitteilungen, 1874).
- OPPENHEIM, M. VON: *Vom Mittelmeer zum Persischen Golf*, Berlin, 1899.
- ROHRBACH, P.: *Im Lande Jahwes and Jesu*, Leipzig, 1902.  
*Die Bagdadbahn*, Berlin, 1902.  
*Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung Westasiens*, Halle, 1908.
- SAROLFA, CH.: *The Bagdad Railway and German Expansion as a Factor of European Politics*, London, 1907.
- SCHWEER, W.: *Die Tuerkisch-Persischen Erdolvorkommen*, Hamburg, 1919.
- SPRENGER, A.: *Babylonien, das reichste Land der Vorzeit und das lohnendste Kolonisationsfeld der Gegenwart*, 1879.

ISLAM AND KHALIFATE:

- BECKER, CH. B.: *Islam*, Leipzig, 1921.
- CHARMES, G.: *L'Avenir de la Turquie; le Panislamisme*, Paris, 1883.
- HARTMANN, M.: *Der Islamische Orient*, Berlin, 1910.
- HORTEN, M.: *Islamische Geisteskultur*, Leipzig, 1915.

ARMENIA:

- BLISS, E. M.: *Turkey and the Armenian Atrocities*, London, 1896.
- BRANDES, G.: *Armenien und Europa*, Genf, 1920.
- CHARMETANT, R. P.: *Tableau officiel des massacres d'Armenie*, Paris, 1896.
- CLÉMENCEAU, G.: *Les Massacres d'Armenie*, Paris, 1896.
- Réponse du Sultan Abdul Hamid à Clémenceau, 1896.
- GLADSTONE, W. E.: *The Eastern Question* (speech), London, 1877.  
*The Armenian Question* (speech), London, 1895.
- MORGENTHAU, H.: *Les faits les plus horribles de l'Histoire*, Paris, 1918.

ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

- LIVRE JAUNE: *Documents Diplomatiques des Massacres d'Armenie*, Paris, 1896.
- LEPSIUS, J.: *Armenia and Europe*, London, 1897.
- PHILARMÈNE: *La vérité sur les massacres d'Armenie*, Paris, 1896.
- ROHRBACH, P.: *Vom Kaukasus zum Mittelmeer*, Leipzig, 1903.
- STEVENSON, S.: *The Case of the Armenians*, London, 1893.
- TOYNBEE, A. J.: *Armenian Atrocities*, London, 1915.
- WHITMAN, S.: *Turkish Memories*, London, 1914.

BALKANS:

- Balkanhalbinsel, Bd. IV. *Weltgeschichte*, begr. v. H. F. Helmolt, hgg. v. A. Tillet, Leipzig und Wien, 1919.
- DRANDAR, A. G.: *Actualité Balcanique*, Paris, 1912.
- MACH, R. VON: *Aus bewegter Balkanzeit, 1879-1918*, Berlin, 1928.

YOUNG TURKS; REVOLUTION 1908-1909

- BERARD, V. *La Mort de Stamboul. Considérations sur le Gouvernement des Jeunes Turques*, Paris, 1908.  
*La Revolution Turque*, Paris, 1908.
- FEHMI (YUSUF FAHMI): *Revolution Ottomane*, Paris, 1911.
- GIEORGIEVITS, V.: *Die tuerkische Revolution und ihre Aussichten*. Leipzig, 1908.
- KUTSCHBACH, A., *Die tuerkische Revolution*, Halle, 1908.
- MORO, K., *Unter Jungturkischer Gewaltherrschaft*, Wien, 1910.
- SARRON, A., *La Jeune Turquie et la revolution*, Paris, 1912.
- STERNBERG, GRAF A.: *Die Turkische Revolution*, Berlin, 1909.

## INDEX

- Abdul Hamid, Heir to the throne: 85-8; becomes Sultan: 12, 89-91; conspiracy Ali Suavi's, 139-41; Khalif, God's Shadow (*see Islam*), 101, 107, 163, 221-37, 239, 242, 286-8; persecutorial mania, 113-14, 154-6, 160, 201-9, 211-14, 240-1; deposition, 273-9; exile, 278-9; death, 287-8
- Administration of Turkey: 8, 9, 68-9, 137, 144-5, 148, 150, 210-11, 213
- America: 171, 245, 250
- Arabs: 81, 152, 236-7, 288
- Armenia, suspected Armenian descent of Abdul Hamid: 19, 109, 172-4, 237; promised reforms, 132; revolt and massacre, 9, 12, 170, 174-9, 265
- Bagdad Railway (*see European Powers*)
- Balkans: 77, 79, 92-6, 100-1, 106, 123, 133-7, 164-5, 242-4, 285
- Bankruptcy, Turkish, 1876: 76-7
- Bismarck (*see European Powers, Germany*)
- British Statesmen and Turkey: Duke of Argyll, 178; Mr. Balfour, 248-9; Lord Beaconsfield, 131, 138, 151, 246; Mr. Canning (Lord Stratford de Redcliffe), 183; Joseph Chamberlain, 248; Lord Curzon, 248; Lord Dufferin, 151-2; Sir Henry Elliott, 83; Mr. Gladstone, 97, 110, 151, 178, 246; Lord Layard, 138, 155; Lord Palmerston, 40, 131; Sir Thomas Roe, 8, 106; Sir Hamilton Seymour, 39, 40; Lord Salisbury, 107, 200; Lord Shaftesbury, 142
- Conference of Constantinople: 1876 (*see European Powers*)
- Congress of Berlin, 1878 (*see European Powers*)
- Crimean War, 1854-5: 11, 40-2, 44, 110

## ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Eastern Question (*see* European Powers)

Education of Turkish princes (*see* Palace life)

Egypt: 13, 151-2, 217, 245

England (*see* European Powers): visit of Sultan Aziz and his nephews, Murad and Abdul Hamid, 1867, 64-5.

European Powers, Turkey's relationship with:

Austria: 12, 60, 65-6, 93, 106, 110, 116, 164-5

Britain and France: 8, 11-12; at the time of Abdul Hamid's childhood, 21-2, 25-6; events leading to Crimean War, 37-44, 47; visit to World Exhibition in Paris, 1867, 53-63; western influence in the Balkans, 93-7, 243; audience with Sultan, 104; Abdul Hamid's repudiation of the West, 106, 109-10, 117, 217, 220, 222, 224, 233, 240; events connected with Turko-Russian war, 1877-8, 129-38; Egypt, 151-3, 164; in connection with Armenia, 173, 177; in connection with the German Kaiser's visit to Turkey, 1898, 188, 191, 196; Young Turks, 253, 286; Napoleon III, Emperor of France, 38-9, 42, 53

Germany (*see* below), Congress of Berlin, Kaiser Wilhelm II, Bagdad Railway: Bisinck, 131, 196-7; World Exhibition, 60; friendship with Russia, 12, 61, 110; plans of Turko-German agreement, 217-18; Young Turks, 286

Russia: 11-12; events leading to Crimean War, 1854-5, 38-40; interference in Bulgaria, 93-5; Russo-Turkish War, 1877-8, 110, 116-24, 128-30; permanent Russian danger for Turkey, 164-5; in connection with the German Kaiser's visit to Turkey, 1898, 188, 196; Anglo-Russian demands for reforms in Turkey, 253; Ignatiev, General, 77, 116

Bagdad Railway: 12, 190-1, 244-51

Conference in Constantinople, 1876, 106-9

Congress of Berlin, 1878: 131-6, 170

Eastern Question: 106, 131, 185, 191

Harem of Turkish Sultans (*see* Palace Life)

Ignatiev, Russian general (*see* European Powers, Russia)

Islam: Antagonism between Christians and Mohammedans, 8, 9, 17, 26; after Crimean War, 47-9; Bulgaria, 94-6; during Russo-Turkish War, 1877-8, 117-24, 129; Armenia, 172-4; Balkans, 1902, 243-4; Young Turks, 285-6; Pan Islam (Khalifate), 101, 107, 122, 222-39, 242

Jerusalem, Holy Places: 37-40 (*see* Crimean War; Kaiser's visit to Turkey)

## ABDUL HAMID: THE SHADOW OF GOD

Kaiser Wilhelm II: 60, 180-201

Loans, Turkish: 10, 36-42, 44, 50, 52

Midhat Pasha (Turkish minister of liberal views): 83, 86-7, 90, 104-5  
Mourad, Prince (Sultan Murad V), elder brother of Abdul Hamid:  
(*see Sultans*)

Oil wells: 61, 249-54, 256, 287

Palace life, of Turkish Sultans: audience, 98-9; drive to the mosque, 157-60; education of princes, 32, 45-6, 49; harem, 17-19, 21-3, 27, 31, 34, 41, 55; Hadji, Abdul Hamid's mother, 18, 20, 22, 30, 33; Pertevale, mother of Sultan Aziz and friend of young Abdul Hamid, 34-6, 41, 71, 78, 88; selamlik (men's apartments), 22, 27-9, 45; Abdul Hamid's harem, 104-5, 142, 166-9, 191-3, 207-9, 281-2; Abdul Hamid's Yildiz palace (*see Yildiz palace*)

Parliament, Turkish: 114-16, 258-60

Sultans, Turkish: Aziz (Abdul Hamid's predecessor), 12, 34, 36, 51-2, 55, 70-74, 80, 82-4, 104; Mahmud II, 9, 11; Mejid (Abdul Hamid's father), 9, 11, 17-18, 22-6, 29, 30, 33-4, 41, 50, 52, 172; Murad III, 35; Murad V (Abdul Hamid's elder brother who never ruled), 36, 50-1, 54-5, 58-9, 75, 77-8, 81-9, 104, 116, 139, 141, 156, 165, 207, 247; Reschad (Abdul Hamid's younger brother and successor), 280; Suleiman, the Glorious, 8, 128, 161; Suleiman III, 101

World Exhibition in Paris, 1867, Sultan Aziz and his nephews Murad and Abdul Hamid visit to: preparation for the journey, 52-5; sojourn in France, 56-63; in England, 64-5

World War, 1914-18: 5, 131, 287-8.

Yildiz Palace: 113-14, 125-8, 163-5, 202-3, 279, 280, 282-3

Young Turks (Turkish Revolution, 1908-9), 67, 252-61, 266-7, 285, 287









